

1508/32

A
R E V I E W
OF THE
CATHOLIC QUESTION,
IN WHICH
THE CONSTITUTIONAL INTERESTS OF IRELAND, WITH
RESPECT TO THAT PART OF THE NATION,
ARE INVESTIGATED,
TO WHICH IS ANNEXED,
THE
D E C L A R A T I O N
OF THE
CATHOLIC SOCIETY OF DUBLIN,
AND A VINDICATION THEREOF.

BY THEOBALD M'KENNA, M. D. Member
of the ROYAL IRISH ACADEMY.

O! how blind to all that truth requires,
Who think it freedom if a part aspires!
When contending chiefs blockade the throne,
Contracting regal power to stretch their own.
When I behold a factious band agree,
To call it freedom, if themselves be free,
Fear, pity, justice, indignation start,
Tear off reserve, and bare my swelling heart;
'Till half a patriot, half a coward grown,
I fly from petty tyrants to the throne.

GOLDSMITH.

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P R E F A C E.

THIS pamphlet, a tribute to a cause in which from infancy I have felt animated, was published about twelve months ago, under a title somewhat differing from the present. A new edition having been requested, I have added many arguments which since occurred, and omitted, particularly in the introduction, a reference to circumstances, which now are become obsolete. It was at that time dedicated to an illustrious public character. To some the dedication appeared adulatory; in the opinion of others it implied censure; desirous to avoid the vice and indecorum, I have omitted it.

The principles, here delivered, are similar to those which appeared in the declaration of the Catholic Society of Dublin; the first Irishmen of that persuasion, who ventured for a century past to look their bondage in the face, and to enquire by what pretence it could be justified. Whilst at the entrance of every walk in life, ruffian monopoly was stationed to intercept our progress, he who did not repine must have wanted the common feelings of humanity. But it had been inculcated to the Catholics, and with too much success, that not alone to suffer was their lot, but to suffer without a murmur.

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From the despotism of this oriental maxim, the independant citizens who compose that society first emancipated their understandings. They dared to address their countrymen on the subject of their grievances; and so much coincidence of feeling did common wrongs inspire, that having prepared that appeal to the justice of the Irish nation, when it became my duty to present it to the society, I found that I had only given expression to sentiments, which were common to every individual.

The propositions which form the declaration were in general extracted from the former edition of this essay. I have caused it to be annexed, that it may assist the reasoning, and speak its own vindication. During a considerable part of last winter that paper, and the author of it, were targets for the assault of every man desirous to signalize his zeal or literary prowess. Some gentlemen, conscious, I presume, of superior sagacity, applauded the composition, whilst they lamented and censured the misguided simpleton who framed it. Others, less indulgent, consigned manner, matter and author to that gulph of general obloquy prepared in Ireland to receive whatever the touch of popery contaminates; my antagonists seeming to find a tower of strength in the fanatic outcry against Papists, rejected the less necessary auxiliary of argument. One writer, to whom the characters of a gentleman or scholar appeared useless incumbrances; amused himself with misrepresentation enlivened by malignity. That my name should have been combined with the cause of the Irish Catholics, and made a subject of common invective, was a compliment beyond what I ever aspired to receive, and for which this anonymous libeller has my sincere acknowledgments. I cannot indeed avoid expressing the triumph of a partizan, when I consider the mode of attack in general adopted. He who is satisfied that justice favours him, seldom resorts to malice, and disdains to stoop
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to the meanness of misrepresentation; neither proves more than peevish tenacity in a bad cause, which admits of no more valid apology. As all the decorums, observed in liberal life, have in the course of this discussion been neglected, it may well be concluded, that the dearth of arguments, proceeded from the want of any rational grounds of defence, not surely from reluctance to produce them. It is not less reasonable to suppose, that the cause has sunk beneath its own sterility. That which has been circulated with earnestness, and received with avidity, was probably the work of no ordinary champion.

The republication of this pamphlet will serve to justify what has been impeached, and to illustrate what appeared obscure in the declaration of the society. I know not that any more conclusive evidence could be offered, to manifest the absurdity of the popery laws, than that the abettors of them shun the light; fair discussion is eluded; arguments opposed by vague declamation; and where they are irresistible, stigmatized with the foul epithet of sedition. Thus have the persons interested in the subserviency of the Irish Catholics endeavoured to alarm the cautious, and to deceive the unwary, imputing principles the very contrast of what existed in the minds of those to whom they were attributed. Having I hope entered fully into the question, I may be excused the drudgery of personal altercation with those who have selected me for the object of their animadversion. Under the different heads they will find their respective objections considered. For the uniformity of the composition, I have preserved that part of my reasoning, which relates to the law professions, although Parliament has advanced so far in the road of justice, as no longer to curtail the bounty of heaven, by prohibiting the Catholics to employ in these pursuits the natural advantages of talents
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and connexions. I have seen in print what was intitled the speech of the gentleman who took the lead on that occasion. I really believe that he has considered the subject more rationally than he is willing to acknowledge; when during the discussion, the epithets contemptible and illiterate were bestowed on those of the Catholic body, who preferred a claim to the elective franchise, the members who made the assertion committed themselves before the tribunal of the public, whose judgment must of necessity award those epithets, either to the calumniators or calumniated; it would rather appear that the Catholic claimants proved their good sense, when they avowed themselves more desirous to make a million of freemen, than ten barristers. Not admitting that any ascendancy ought to exist but those of reason and national advantage, I must confess with reluctance, that the oration of that respectable gentleman, and of those who spoke (they did not argue) on the same side of the question excited in my mind rather a sensation of ridicule; perhaps no occasion ever exhibited a more pitiable picture of common sense, borne down by prejudice, and stifled by self interest; what is that logic, which defining all the orders of which a free constitution* should consist, can find no admission for

** In the course of this memorable debate, one gentleman is said to have declared that Ireland could not be free or happy, unless the constitution consisted of a Protestant King, Parliament and Constituents; another wished to add a Protestant bar; a third (and parliament agreed with him) was of opinion that Protestantism was not safe, if permission should be granted to promote a physician of merit to a medical professorship. We since have heard that the privileges of parliament are the privilege of the people; although this very parliament rejected petitions on behalf of the majority of that*

for the great body of the people? methinks, if Protestant constituents alone must controul the state, they alone should bear the burden of its expences. It requires more sagacity than falls to the lot of an *uninstruēd Papist*, upon any other terms to justify the proposition. But it is not alone from the press and parliament, that these strange doctrines are delivered; in private conversation it seems to be assumed, that the man who belives transubstantiation, and admits the spiritual supremacy of the Pope, ought of course to be the subject vassal of those who hold a creed not quite so comprehensive; whatever is conceded to the Catholics, is represented the free gift of benevolence; it is deemed arrogant in the extreme, that the members of that communion should pretend a title to any immunities. To me who do not consider the laws against papists, more respectable than the laws against witches, the doctrine is extremely novel. I have been taught that in civilized society, every man was authorized to employ his talents, in whatever honorable path of advancement pleased him most, and make of his property such disposal as he should think expedient. When I hear from that gentleman, whom I allude to with regret, as I do

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that people, and gave them to understand that they never shall (if some who call themselves "their friends in parliament" can prevent it) have any controul over the deliberations of the men who vote away their money. See Sir Hercules Langrishe's Speech. So much is common sense at variance with the politics of Ireland. I am willing to believe that many of the members of parliament who have thus dismissed the Catholic question, have not considered the disfranchisement of that people in all its consequences. If they had, they must perceive that more evil arises from their favorite ascendancy, than could ensue, if it were possible to erect a Catholic establishment in Ireland.

not quote him with approbation, that a century of the most exemplary good conduct was the price paid by the Irish Catholics for licence to buy land with their own money, it appears to me, that they received as a favour that which belonged to them; and not less preposterous than the exactions of our Edwards and Henrys, when they levied an hundred hens from a lady for permission to see her husband.

Searching for political information in ancient and modern writers, I could never discover that a man's creed was to regulate his situation in civil society. Mr. Locke attributes certain tenets to the Catholics, which he thinks may be punished by disqualifications. But yet Mr. Locke does not insinuate that under pretence of these ill-founded imputations, an entire nation should be disfranchised; every line of that great man's works establish a contrary principle. I will proceed beyond Mr. Locke; the opinions he cites, deserve the most severe animadversion of the magistrate, they are inconsistent with the existence of civilized life, and he who holds them should be retrenched from society. But as they belong not to the Irish Catholics, nor to any other Catholics that I have known, I must beg leave to suggest that his exception is inapplicable.

My mind is unluckily fashioned so very unlike those of the gentlemen who have seen treason, sedition, libel, and what is called levelling principles in the declaration of the Catholic Society, that I am really at a loss how I should argue with them; we do not seem to entertain common ideas, nor do I believe the terms we use bear a common import. Parental predilection may deceive an author, but to me that paper seems to convey a panegyric on the British constitution, and a modest expostulation with those who withhold the benefits of it from the Irish Catholics. The reasoning of it is founded, not on principles of natural equality, but upon that right of civil and political liberty, which the British constitution

stitution holds out to British subjects. Franchise in England is the creature of property, and belongs to every man who chuses to acquire it. In Ireland, it is the reward of a particular mode of faith, often of a pliable or subservient conscience. It is with us a weapon of assault; in Great Britain a shield against oppression. We complained, indeed, but it was of abuses, perversions of British principles, which discriminate us unjustly from our fellow citizens. We complained, but it was of the privation of those franchises which render the condition of a Briton the most enviable upon earth, and which elevate the throne upon the blessings of a contented people. We have not declined obedience to the chief magistrate of the state, although we yield it reluctantly to the heptarchy of borough usurpers, who divide with him the sovereignty. We love our country, not its infatuation. We revere the constitution, not its blemishes. We admire that constitution too truly to be content with the dwarfish caricature of it, which is exhibited in Ireland for adoration. To the supporters of Protestant monopoly we leave that political idolatry. Such were the sentiments of the gentlemen who did me the honor to use my words in the expression of our common feelings. If that is sedition against rational liberty, we were betrayed into the error by Locke, by Somers, by Montesquieu and Blackstone. If it is seditious, it is the sedition of parliament itself, the sedition of the bill of rights, the sedition of the English, and of the Irish revolutions.

But it seems, that to have called the public attention to the claim of the Roman Catholics, was an offence of enormous magnitude; if so, the members of the Catholic Society have sinned grievously. I acknowledge no ordinary share in the guilt; and what is more, I boast myself impenitent. The general currency which the declaration of that Society

obtained, contributed not a little to direct the public mind to the great national object it discusses. When a person resolved never to conform to the Established Church, declares himself contented in the condition of an Irish Catholic, I hesitate which I should principally doubt, his good sense, his spirit, or veracity. Those may be satisfied whose lot in life supersedes the necessity of exertions; those may submit who want energy to make them. I am one of the many who writhe under the pressure of the penal laws; who have met them in the outset of life barricading each favorite pursuit, and who meet them still in my course, insuperable impediments. The load is intolerable, the monopoly has been overstrained. They are not men who do not desire relief. They are not rational beings who do not endeavour to obtain it. I know but of two expedients which possibly can be used; force and argument; and those I should imagine give the most unquestionable evidence of their regard for the constitution, and good dispositions to their fellow citizens, who adopting the latter method, ingenuously avow that they feel their situation, and throw themselves for redress upon the returning reason of their infatuated countrymen. We have been charged with confederacies of requisition, such associations have been formed, and I trust, nay am confident, that they will be religiously adhered to. But we were compelled to adopt them by confederacies of insult, and confederacies of refusal. For fourteen years had the Irish Catholics looked with silent expectation for that progressive emancipation, which few are so hardy as utterly to deny to them. They not only expected in vain the profession of the law, for that pittance of the constitutional rights of three millions of loyal Irishmen, would then have given satisfaction, but saw themselves introduced as a matter of course into every disqualifying statute. They were treated by parliament, with not so much

much respect as Herrings, and rather less attention than Game and Greyhounds. Two modest applications, in the year 1791, for such relief as ministers might please to recommend, were received with coldness, and dismissed with little ceremony; opposition and administration fled alike from our cause. But we were not permitted to remain in a state of suffering neutrality. The Armagh manifesto revived an absurd law, which the temper of the times encouraged us to believe had become obsolete. Thus provoked, several Catholics did associate, and thought it adviseable to bring their condition by solemn appeal before the tribunal of the public. Nor do I conceive that any person claiming to be the friend of the Irish Catholics, can censure this liberal discussion of their pretensions; he should rather rejoice, if he were serious in his profession, that proselytes were won to the cause he had espoused, and arguments furnished to justify or to assist him. I do not find that those, who in the English parliament promoted the abolition of the slave trade, vehemently disapproved of the publications, by which the people of England were prevailed on to co-operate in erecting that eternal monument to the benevolence of Britain. Nor is it customary, that the political leaders in either parliament, should discountenance those literary exertions, by which their favorite measures are recommended. Careless of the censure, and unsolicitous of the approbation of those who oppose themselves to the Irish Catholics, who seek to enfeeble them by divisions, to bribe them by inadequate relief, or to lull them to acquiescence by treacherous caresses. When the occasion offered, I have used the freedom of a scholar, and a man of spirit, in arraiguing the Irish Inquisition; and still shall continue to arraign it, forgetting that I am of the number of those whom the Irish legislature insults with the epithet, loyal; and degrades by the appellation, Roman Catholic.

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I have endeavoured to go at large into the subject, to place it in the light (such indeed it ever has appeared to me) not of a party question, in which one class alone is interested, but of a great national concern, and involving the fate not of the Catholics, but of Ireland. I have endeavoured to prove that nothing less than a miracle could enable the Catholics to subvert the present establishment, and substitute their own religion on its ruins. If that proposition be established, the penal code must appear a system of causeless rigour; national honor, and national justice will call alike for its abolition; on this ground it would be a duty, but I have endeavoured to prove it the interest of the Irish to abolish these statutes. I have advanced, and sought by arguments to substantiate my assertion, that the evils which are complained of in our constitution, proceed from the disfranchisement of the Catholics. That no effectual restraint can ever be opposed to the Irish aristocracy, unless the entire nation be admitted into a participation of common right, limited only by that pecuniary qualification which may operate as a bounty upon industry. When I talk of the aristocracy, I mean not that dignified corporation which the constitution recognizes, I mean those, of whom the undue influence has disfigured the beautiful system which originated in the woods and in courts was contaminated; those who having possessed themselves of all the power of the state, make the forms of freedom not the honor of the crown, or the safety of the people, but a chain of pretences for their private aggrandizement. When I speak of the real English constitution, it is the continual theme of my approbation. It is, perhaps, not the best possible system, but it seems most happily adapted to the state of society which prevails in these islands. It provides an outlet for influence, a resting place for pride, and an avenue for ambition; thus combining the most dangerous passions,
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and causing them to conspire, for the support, not as might be naturally expected, for the destruction of liberty.

Bowing with all respect to the authority of parliament, when we see proceedings in which dignity should preside, degraded by the littleness of individuals, by pert absurdity, and loquacious nonsense, the reverence due to the institution is impaired, by the contempt which is thus of necessity drawn upon its members; it may interest the gentlemen of that assembly, who hoped that the paper I have so often mentioned might never extend beyond this kingdom; to learn that it circulates in foreign languages, and foreign countries, where their names will never reach, and where it is little likely, omnipotent as is the high court of parliament, to be accompanied by their criticisms. I am not surprized to see those who wish to preserve appearances with the world, regret that a picture, not very flattering, of Irish philosophy is submitted to Europe. If the representation be faithful, they who presented it are contented. An allusion satisfied the more delicate; one gentleman singled out the Declaration of the Catholic Society, and my name, in a manner which, but that I suppose the usage of parliament is above decorum as well as law, I should pronounce illiberal. When a law officer of note complains of that which is not reprehensible, and halloos libel against a strictly constitutional publication, it would seem a natural inference, that he has failed in the great object of his life; that he understands not what is libel, or what is constitution. In deference to the learned profession to which he belongs, and to the crown which placed him near the head of it, I will rather suppose that he pronounced without examination. I should imitate himself were I to call him a quack in law; but my judgment must be new modelled, ere I can cease to think him a quack in politics. Having proceeded

proceeded so far in the road to preferment, there is little doubt but that he will attain the summit, in a country in which enterprize constitutes merit; in which pedantry wears the rewards of learning; and the praise of genius is lavished on pretenders.



INTRODUCTION.

INTRODUCTION.

THE laws, which punish non-conformity to the established religion, have frequently, in England, been the topic of free discussion; the spirit and tendency of these restrictions, have been exposed without reserve, and the conduct of those, who maintained them, arraigned with severity. The controul assumed over conscience, was felt and represented, arrogant and intrusive, by the Protestant Dissenters; a description of resolute, and high spirited men, jealous of their own rights, and usually not indifferent to the rights of others. In the arguments of these learned and discerning persons, (for such is the character of the Presbyterian advocates,) the evidence of truth and justice appeared irresistible; yet was not the conviction, they successfully laboured to impress, designed for universal benefit; it was a barrier erected to protect particular descriptions of citizens from the intemperance of prosperous bigotry; but not of strength sufficient to repel every encroachment of false zeal, infringing on natural right, under pretences of religion. Much in the ground work was done for the general cause of liberty. In this school were first promulgated the sacred doctrines of man's native dignity and freedom. Here first were the just powers of society defined, and a standard established, to ascertain, by what sacrifice

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fice its advantages should be purchased. The prerogatives of conscience were asserted, and the exercise of private judgment vindicated, against the interference of human tribunals. But, having exculpated themselves from the imputation of tenets, which might subject them to the jurisdiction of the magistrate, these writers sometimes insinuated, that with regard to other denominations, the apprehension was not equally groundless; that there did exist opinions, unlike what they professed, reprehensible and dangerous.

*Quæ sibi quisque timebat,
Unius in miseri exitium conversa tulere.*

It is the object of this essay to investigate the case of the Roman Catholics, against whom such accusations have been chiefly directed; hitherto, partly from the timidity of these injured religionists; partly, from the antipathy entertained against them, their grievances have seldom been strongly, and fully stated, and not often considered with the calmness, which the nature of the subject merits. It has been made, rather the supplication of indigent calamity, than a solemn state question of expedience, and justice; and addressed, not to the good sense, but to the commiseration of Protestants. I wish to call the national mind to this investigation, as to a public concern of the most serious nature, and infinitely more essential to the scheme of Irish constitution, than even the favourite measures of reform and responsibility. We live in an age, in which such discussion may be looked for; it is an age of benevolent attention to the oppressed; an age of vigorous enterprize, and hardy speculation. The particular circumstances of Ireland call at this moment for the enquiry. Complaints are loudly uttered, both in and out of parliament, that the executive power is not sufficiently



ciently controuled, and that the popular branch of the constitution has not its due influence; it may prove interesting, to consider whether these, and other evils of magnitude cannot be redressed, by the emancipation of the Catholics; it may not be found superfluous to examine, whether the equipoise, essential to a free state can be preserved; or whether any limitations upon the executive power can be relied on, whilst three fourths of the nation are obliged, to regard themselves dependant on that power, and to adopt sentiments which are only to be reconciled with a state of abject despotism; "that they are at the mercy of the crown, and "must comply with the caprices of its officers," vassals without political pride, political importance, or political interest.

No nation can have an interest distinct from that of three fourths of its inhabitants; if it is inexpedient that the Irish Catholics should be free, the Protestants ought, in justice and common sense, to abandon the pursuit of liberty. If restrictions on the monarch, are not for the greatest good of the greatest number, our monarchy should be changed, from limited to absolute; and the operations of government, no longer impeded, to convenience a minority of the nation; lectures on freedom are delivered in Parliament, repeated from the press, and re-echoed at every local meeting; is it to be presumed, that these circumstances shall make no impression on the Catholics? When we are taught the necessity of a popular controul over power; when we are told that ministers do not merit confidence, that their practice and principles usually are vicious, we should indeed, labour under more than Beotian dullness, if we did not desire to possess the privilege of political interference, of which the usefulness is recommended by the first talents in the land, and of which, to those who enjoy it, the value seems inestimable. The rights of man,

the rights of the people are the themes of every public and private society. Shall we not be induced to enquire, what there is more than man in a Protestant, or less in a Roman Catholic, which should degrade the one, from his natural level, and in the same proportion elevate the other? The pre-eminence conceded to wealth and station is salutary; that enjoyed by merit natural, the respect paid to birth, an allowable prejudice, arising out of both; but no apology of expedience or justice, can be offered for the distribution of mankind into casts by their religious tenets, and the subsequent selection of a chosen people; the preference is not the reward of superior virtue; the virtues of every sect are similar, and by all are like principles of morality inculcated; it is not calculated to promote science, to encourage industry, or animate honor; we have proofs in Ireland, that religious dissention, fomented by authority, constitutes an almost insuperable obstacle to improvement.

The circumstances of France are often alledged in argument to silence the call for political alteration. The catastrophe of the Gallic despotism might certainly furnish an useful lesson to persons in authority; it might teach them, that how speciously soever established, that cannot be secure, which has injustice for its basis; it might inculcate the propriety of revising a system of government, whilst yet revision may be calmly managed; and of accommodating laws to the temper of those, whose obedience must give them efficacy; it might shew, that a government of force, cannot be relied on: that government must somewhere rest upon opinion, either of those who enforce, or those who obey it; the latter is more conducive to the ease and happiness, both of subjects and rulers. The entire fabric of French politics was built on a few private views, and unstable prejudices, as the nation learned to think, the former were dissipated; the

the latter, as it became animated with the enthusiasm of public virtue; a few men capable of setting the example of either, are sufficient to operate on the public mind this material alteration. I do not see that any country ought to slight admonition; I do not see that it is culpable to offer it; until the enemy was at the walls of Rome, Vitellius refused to credit the intelligence of his approach; he continued inattentive to the last, and became the victim of his obstinacy.

But unless we will force the comparison upon ourselves, I discern no analogy between the situation of France, and that of Ireland; when France awoke from her lethargy of implicit obedience, she found scattered around but the vestiges of freedom, indistinct, and converted for the most part into abuses. A few indefinite privileges, hastily snatched in times of feudal barbarism, not adapted to the manners of the present age; not compatible with the degree of information that subsists in it; the æra of gallic torpor was a busy scene in England; during the entire period the spirit of the nation was alive, and seconded by statesmen of no ordinary ability; oppressive institutions were rescinded or corrected; reforms alone in these countries are necessary; they may be accomplished by the ordinary means of legislation; we have in Ireland the model of an excellent constitution, the scale is indeed contracted, it should be rendered capacious of every citizen; but when the democratic organ shall have been repaired, the interest of a few selfish men subdued, and the illusions of the prejudiced dissipated, we shall possess that constitution which antiquity applauded, and to the excellence of which every eminent modern has borne testimony. With Byzantium before our eyes, it is not to be presumed we should again attempt to erect a Chalcedon. No inference can hold from the state of France, to that of Ireland; if the former was

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was necessitated to take its government to pieces, and still feels the convulsions inseparable from that awful expedient; it cannot be argued, that the legislature of another nation ought not to entertain the complaints of its subjects, investigate at leisure the nature of their grievance, and apply without commotion the necessary remedy. It is absurd to suppose that of all human institutions, government alone is not susceptible of improvement; no, the prudent politician, whilst he dreads the hand which tears, shuns not that which rectifies; he does not presume that in the imbecility entailed on our imperfect nature, there is an exception in favour of the maxims, by which states are regulated; conscious of this truth, and earnest to avert the evils inseparable from a government, which does not correspond with its real object, and communicate happiness to the people; he will accommodate his policy to the temper of the times, and not crush the subject under the weight of institutions which have survived their meaning. I do not think that a reasonable justification could have ever been alledged for this system, but at this day, every reflecting person must allow, that it admits of no apology. There is no Pretender to the crown, whose hopes the Roman Catholics might be supposed to favour. There is not any foreign state with whom they might be suspected to connect themselves. But there exist impediments in the selfish views, and personal interests of those who have collected to themselves the few advantages attainable by Ireland in its present state of political debility. These persons are aware, that a national coalition must prove fatal to their monopoly. They know that the free intercourse of the people is prevented by the restrictions imposed on the one part, and the jealousies entertained by the other. To perpetuate the disunion, Protestant ascendancy, a visionary unmeaning apprehension is presented to the Protestants.

testants. For the Dissenters who know too well the protestant strength of Ireland, to be deceived by a groundless surmise of danger, and who are too shrewd to grasp at a shadow of dominion, and abandon the substance of public welfare, they have invented another cant more specious, but not less silly, of the incapacity for freedom.

I never heard of any more unphilosophic jargon, than this of incapacity for freedom; and yet some very sensible men have been deceived by it. Is there any thing so complicated in the regulation of our closest concerns, that we should require with all this parade, to be initiated in the mystery? Must a man have the qualifications of a minister of state, in order to divine what gentleman in his neighbourhood is likely in parliament to oppose unnecessary restrictions upon private life; or unnecessary taxes upon private property? The elective franchise should be as little circumscribed as possible. Human nature is a combination of passions, and interests; and if an inlet is suffered to remain, corruption in some shape will assail it; men in high rank will submit to ambition; in more subordinate situations to flattery, or a share of power; in low life to money. It is the great security of a nation, that the number of persons engaged in the defence of liberty, oppose insuperable difficulties to the labour of debauching them. This is not the case in Ireland; the number of electors are to the mass of inhabitants comparatively few, and men of fortune, by an inconsiderable expence, can buy the indigent protestants, or create so many occasional freeholders as will procure a majority. Our government is therefore not so pure as it might be rendered; and this depravity is upheld by the combination of bigotry and selfishness, of which Ireland has made an apotheosis, and worships by the appellation of Protestant Ascendency.

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This Island has received from nature every capability of improvement, that has been conferred upon Great Britain; why are we not equally forward in commerce, science, civilization, in manufactures, and agriculture? Because principles of rational polity are pursued in England. Because the British are an united, and the Irish a distracted nation. The Irish Protestants hold to government that relation which the Janissaries do to the Turk; and which the Pretorian Guard did to the Roman Emperors; a garrison stationed to awe a dependent people, and possessing exclusively the favour of government. The Protestant Ascendancy, in the sense it now seems to be received in this country, is an eternal sentence of bastardy and degradation; a bar in the escutcheon of Ireland, that limits to her more fortunate sister the inheritance of their common parent.*

When the wishes of the people of Ireland are opposed, on any great design of national advantage, we usually accuse some refinement in the cabinet of England; that great nation is supposed to depend on stratagem for its connexion with a country inclined to proceed to infatuation in its affectionate attachment to Great Britain; it will not be necessary to insist on the profligacy of that base artifice—"divide and govern." Surely those who endeavour to practice it, are injudicious in the choice both of the nation, and the particular instances for which they select it. Remove the cause of complaint, the effects of consequence must cease, the interest of the sister kingdoms, and the influence of connexion and property, mutually intermingled, will sufficiently provide for the security of the empire; a prosperous people will never involve

* *There is much talk in this country of capacity for freedom; but it is in fact the Protestants who are unfit to enjoy liberty, for they desire to pervert the use of it.*

INTRODUCTION.

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involve itself in the calamities of civil war, merely to indulge ambition, or contend for a phantom of pre-eminence. But let the managers for English influence beware how they multiply the causes of discontent, and inducements to innovation. If every subdivision of Irishmen be angered, and discontented; if the Protestant complains that his privileges are invaded; the Roman Catholic, that he is defrauded of the common benefits of society. I dare not dwell on the prospect, it is neither cheering nor consolatory to the friends of Ireland, and of the Empire. Like all other rules which compose the mystery of tyrants, I can discern little in this celebrated maxim, besides obliging those who practice it to a more vigilant policy, and more minute attentions. There is another, not so much used by politicians, but more valuable than volumes of their mystery. "Do to others as you would willingly be done by." If by the aid of this holy precept the artifice of courts was reduced to common sense, and common honesty, the lot of human nature would become more enviable, and the condition of those who govern more tranquil.

Altho' I should not meet any great success, it will at least prove satisfactory, to have removed the question, from the loose invective in which it has hitherto been involved, into a form of more correct and rational deliberation. The object of my essay can scarcely attract censure; it is calculated to dissipate the antipathies, and compose the dissensions, which for two centuries have rendered Ireland proverbially the land of faction. With the zeal which should animate a patriot, but preserving the respect to which established usage is entitled, firm, yet, I trust, not intemperate in my expostulation, I remonstrate against that part of our domestic policy which has been frequently pronounced erroneous, and accused of frustrating the natural advantages of our situation. I proceed still further,

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to arraign the artifices of designing men, who uphold this system; and the delusion of false reasoners, who acquiesce in it as forming impediments to the permanent and peaceful settlement of our constitution. The argument will probably be conducted with temper, it is advanced by one who takes very little concern in the pre-eminence of any sect, but who wishes to see the jurisdiction of power limited to its proper objects, and whose feelings are warm in the cause of justice and his country. Fortunate country, if mutually forgetting the animosities to which distempered times gave origin, every order of citizens were alike occupied in promoting the public welfare, and alike invited to participate in the public happiness.*

* *“Deprived of the rights of a Briton, of all except the meanest, I still cannot forget that I am a Briton.”*

LORD BOLINGBROKE.



C H A P. I.

Of the general rules which should guide a Legislature in imposing penalties, and the application of these rules to the Irish Popery Laws.

THE Legislature in the British constitution is usually pronounced omnipotent; we know, it is true, of no tribunal paramount to parliament, and competent in the first instance to revise or to annul its ordinances; but still there lies an appeal to public opinion. This censorial right, by which the public is authorized to inspect, and to pronounce on, political transactions, distinguishes the free from despotic governments; and the institutions of the British nations have been peculiarly provident to maintain it. The legislator is bound in every instance to exercise his trust with a view to preserve the harmony of the state, and to promote the happiness of the individuals who compose it; and is responsible with his reputation for the exact performance of this duty.

Where, as in the case of the Irish popery laws, the sacrifice exacted is of rights essential to man's well being, and the penalties imposed wrest from him the very first advantages he could have hoped to procure by political association, it becomes a duty more indispensable, that persons in authority shall justify their conduct; there surely exists no internal and decisive evidence, that for having been educated in the Roman Catholic faith, a man necessarily becomes unworthy the confidence of society,

and ought to be excluded from its advantages; and convincing reasons should indeed be offered, to account for what otherwise seems paradoxical, that in a free state there is suffered to arise a great landed, and a great monied interest, not connected with the constitution, nor participating in the blessings of liberty, nor by any means concerned to preserve them. I cannot admit as sufficient what sometimes is alledged, that good order is preserved by maintaining a subordination of religious parties; no religious opinions, nor the consequences of any religious opinions, are as likely to prove subversive of good order as are breach of faith, seduction and adultery; crimes against which, it would seem without detriment to the state, there is not denounced a similar sentence of exclusion.

It cannot be denied that the popery laws are some kind of national injury, and a very severe hardship on the individual sufferers; a question then arises, is there any counterbalance of good by which these evils are compensated? It is my opinion there is not; and this opinion, from a fair statement of their presumed benefits, and certain inconveniencies, I shall endeavour to corroborate. It will, I hope, not be denied that Roman Catholics, like other men, are governed by their passions and their interests, and that in the pursuit of either, they do not, after the manner of wild beasts, rush upon their prey to the risk of destruction, but are guided as other rational beings are, by rules of common sense and of expediency.

If nothing can be opposed but that stale repetition of invective and prejudice, of childish surmise, and visionary apprehension, which constitutes in general the accusation against Roman Catholics, my argument will strongly plead for the reversal of the attainder under which they suffer; and with the more force, as we live in a state of society in which government ought not, as in the Turkish Empire, to be reduced to the despotic expedient



pedient of securing on suspicion; but in fact, securing the state against the Roman Catholics, is taking precautions to secure it against itself; for if that rational, and equal liberty, which the British constitution promises, was communicated to every subject, what interest could persons of this religion have, different from other men, whose property is within the realm, whose families are established in it, and who must therefore associate their private concerns with the welfare of their country.

C H A P. II.

Of the hardships inflicted on the Roman Catholics by the Popery Laws.

THE definition is not too extensive, which describes the disqualifications imposed in Ireland on Roman Catholics, as amounting to an utter exclusion from all that can cherish the fine emotions, or gratify the laudable ambition of the noble mind; from whatever imparts its energy to courage, to genius strength and animation; that in fact, they constitute an ordinance of state, forbidding two thirds of the Irish people to consider themselves men of principle, or freemen.

But through the entire system these characteristics are predominant, power and confidence are rigidly withheld, and a line drawn between the objects of coercion, and all other members of the community; the most profligate of the reformed sects is presumed more trust-worthy, than any however reputable of the unfavoured religion; and these latter are, upon all occasions, exposed to the contumely of this mortifying supposition.

Thus, by withholding from them the elective franchise, they are pronounced unfit to act as trustees for their own, and for their country's liberty, and deprived of representation, that essence and first principle of a free constitution.

They are precluded from the hope of advancement through the medium of the active professions; and from the emolument which less ambitious industry might obtain in the distribution of public employments.

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They are stigmatized as suspicious persons, to whom the prudence of the legislature is obliged to deny the ordinary protection of using military weapons.

The midnight robber, if resisted, is enabled to exchange his character by day, and to expose his victim to a legalized injury; a peaceable citizen may be punished for having in his possession those arms by which his life was protected.

Let it not be said that this penalty is rarely inflicted; the cant of the present day is liberality of sentiment, and conduct; as twenty years back it was the dangers of popery, and the necessity of preventing the growth of it; possibly the caprice of twenty years hence may restore the original order of precaution and jealousy.*

Neither does it afford much consolation, that a dispensing power is conferred on government; the sufferers have good ground to complain, that a rash and unnecessary mark of opprobrium is set upon their body: that the relief to individuals is rendered precarious by the forms of application and burdensome by the perquisites of office. The nation at large will seriously consider, whether, as with the rising prosperity of Ireland, the property of Roman Catholics becomes extensive, so dangerous an engine of influence should be entrusted to the executive government.

Every citizen, according to the nature of his qualifications and merit, has pretensions to share in the rotation of public offices. We contribute with more cheerfulness our quota to the public exigencies, when we recollect that, from this fund, perhaps a son, or brother, absolutely does at present, or is likely at some future day, to derive the means of honorable subsistence; and thus in the emolument
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* This was written long before the celebrated Armagh Resolutions.

of close connexions, the burden of taxes is alleviated; from this consolation, faint and frivolous indeed, the Roman Catholic, by the special interference of the legislature is precluded; an act of rigour the more unwarrantable, as the Sovereign alone is the dispenser of public bounty; and there is no great reason to apprehend, that without the admonition of an Act of Parliament, he would not, in case of danger, provide with sufficient vigilance for his own security.

The prohibition to embark in the most enviable professions, challenges its place in this investigation. To a Roman Catholic of ordinary means, unless he will consent to a wasteful partition of his property, that which to others is a source of pride and consolation, his children are a burden; closed to them are the avenues, which lead from the middle to the superior ranks of life, the fascinating career of intellect and genius—In the various walks of traffic, to which this people are limited, it is idle, nay dangerous, to engage without a natural bias, or habits strongly impressed by education; let but the accident of birth or early prejudice, fix firmly in the Romish faith a mind naturally intelligent and active, the vigour which might have signalized itself in the field, the fertile soil in which imagination had luxuriantly sprouted, and good sense been cultivated with advantage, produces but an outlaw, a vagabond, or bankrupt. Of the ill policy of refusing in the military departments the services of our Roman Catholic countrymen, the brave fellows who distinguish themselves in every part of Europe, have frequently been cited in evidence; a domestic lesson, still recent, might have instructed the Irish nation, that the precaution was useless if not imprudent; when every gale was expected to waft invasion to our coast, and in the general depression of the empire, the people of Ireland, addressing themselves, like the ancient Britons to their
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accustomed protectors, were rebuffed like that people, with a tale of miscarriage, a picture of distress, and a confession of inability; in that day of confusion, this boasted wisdom of past times, and those precious institutions, the result of it were alike forgotten; there was no inclination, no leisure to consult a catechism, a martyrology, or a legend, in order to decide what measure of confidence might be reposed in men, when their dearest interests are in jeopardy. But recollecting for once the natural force of the state, these insulted and injured Papists, were called to defend a country in which they are not cherished. This was not an hour to deem the sword a dangerous delegation, or hesitate at that language of fraternal concord, which the arrogance of even very late times has rejected. The Roman Catholics, without hesitation or reluctance, came forward in the cause of their country; and to their decided interposition Ireland, nay the British empire, was at that day of terror indebted for its preservation. Disappointed in the expectation of internal succour, France abandoned as hopeless a project which had for a long time been designed, and for which the measures had with no little prudence been concerted. But mark in the sequel the retribution offered to these excellent citizens. Happy had that peril proved for Ireland, if, the hurricane, which swept the vermin of peevish apprehensions from the land, had terminated their existence; they returned as the horizon grew serene, to indulge in the sunshine, and mar the prospects of our tranquillity. Popery again became formidable. When their services ceased to be necessary, there was leisure to doubt the good intentions of the Roman Catholics. The arms intrusted to them were in general recalled, and themselves discarded from most volunteer corps in that part of the country, which had immediately witnessed their exertions.* In the

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* This happened in Cork, June, 1779.

only instance, when they might have betrayed their country, they were trusted; they were caressed and confided in at a time when, if ill disposed to the state, their treachery might have produced serious mischief. In the face of that very enemy, whom their prepossessions were supposed to favour, they were embodied; at this day their most sanguine exertions to injure the civil or ecclesiastical establishment could not succeed, and they now are treated with diffidence and contumely. Whence this whimsical overflow of confidence, this unnatural return of suspicion? Let those reconcile the apparent inconsistency, to whom the bondage of their equals seems of little moment, and who attempt to justify it by some plea of wisdom, or appeal to expediency. I cannot grant, that men ever do become so negligent of their concerns, as to tempt an enemy amongst them, merely because he coincides with them in some articles of creed and discipline; but completely to refute those who assert, that their country cannot depend on the Roman Catholics, let us suppose the case for an instant possible; if their misplaced affections have deviated from what duty dictates, they must surely have some object. If it is not France or Spain, the only powers to whom they might reasonably attach themselves, I should gladly be informed who it is? That it is not either, is sufficiently evinced by the circumstance already cited. If these courts had adherents in the country, a secret intelligence must have been established, and never could a more favourable opportunity occur to profit of our divisions, than when the persons on whose dispositions they could rely, were absolutely prepared with arms to receive them. In fact, no such inclination, no such intelligence at the time were even hinted at; it was supposed, and the supposition proceeded no further, that the poor, because they are desperate, would become outrageous. Why then was the old system of
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rigorous coercion revived against men, who in the season of danger and trial, had given a test so unequivocal of their fidelity? To me there seems more of principle in the brutality of fifty years back, however erroneous the judgment of those who at that day harraised the Roman Catholics; however censurable their demeanour, it was consistent throughout. On every rumour of invasion, the members of this obnoxious sect were treated with rigour, and their places of worship levelled; but even in that conduct there was somewhat more than bare-faced imposition, than a wish to exercise dominion, and as a pretext to preserve it, an affectation of terror, which in the perilous situation, that discovered genuine sentiments, was found hypocritical and groundless. After the manner in which we have borne these two extremes of peace and danger, no comment is wanting to explain the motives. There are certainly well-meaning persons deluded by false apprehensions of property, and the establishment. On each of these topics I hope to be able to give satisfaction. Too many are led away by the incense their vanity receives in the consciousness that they mix with men, whose influence on the state is to their own comparatively diminutive, whom they are authorized to treat with the arrogance of protection, and from whom they may receive the homage of dependance.

* From the professions connected with the administration of justice, the Roman Catholics are alike, I know not under what pretence, excluded. These are not offices created by the state, or rewarded by public bounty. They are merely the honorable means by which a man seeks emolument, and pointed out by his natural or acquired accomplishments. To debar them from this source of wealth and mode of industry is an hardship. It is not less so, that a man in his own cause is refused permission

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* *This grievance is now in a great measure removed.*

sion to employ the talents of his son or brother. As in the exclusion from public offices, so in this instance, an additional pecuniary burden is imposed on the professors of this religion; he must feel the disbursements of litigation doubly severe, who recollects that the profusion is to the emolument of strangers, and that no part can possibly be brought to circulate in the little community of his close connexions.

The right of being represented in parliament is not, as some persons weakly or wickedly insinuate, a bauble that attracts septennial respect, and soothes the short-lived vanity of the proprietor. The elective franchise is the soul of freedom; the vital principle, which circulates through the body politic, a stream diffusing animation, nourishment and vigour; where it exists not, the *people* is an inert mass, where the salutary current does not reach, morbid excrescence or gangrene. However remote his influence on the state machine, the consciousness that he possesses some influence, gives to each proud associate in the general privilege, that sense of dignity and independence, which ennobles the meanest of a free people. I need not dwell on the importance of this sentiment in elevating the public mind, and forming a national character; the lesson was taught in America; it was taught at Marston Moor and Edgehill; but even on common interests and occurrences, the right of suffrage has its operation. Upon this, as upon a ground work, are erected the systems of responsibility and controul, these massy pillars in the fabric of the constitution. By this are men at the helm of government kept steady to the object of their trust, and compelled on all occasions to consult the happiness, and seek the approbation of the subject. Parliamentary influence, in its varied degrees, is the chain which links the most eminent with the lower orders, and the recommendation to numberless kind offices, which many stand
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in need of. The gentleman, by his weight at the county election, secures to himself an importance far from despicable in the consideration of rural politics. To the citizen or yeoman, it obtains the kindness of many, the marked protection of some one among his powerful neighbours: thus constituting, but revocable at pleasure, a sort of feudal intercourse, promoted and kept alive by a reciprocity of kindness and advantage. I appeal to those, whom it is most material to convince, the representatives of the people; will any among them deny that, pending his pretensions to represent any great city or county, he is not obliged, whatever may be his feelings, to extend protection to the worst and meanest of those who can serve him, rather than to a Roman Catholic, no matter how meritorious, but from whom no such aid can be expected.

Without the elective franchise there is no security, that government may not at any time alleviate the burdens of the state, by a partial tax on popish property; this species of outrage is not without a precedent; in the assessment of some county taxes, it is well known to have been already practiced. The Roman Catholics possess not that controul over the disposal or imposition of public money, which is given to property in every state pretending to freedom; for the distribution of equal justice, they are simply to depend on common honesty, a virtue of casual and uncertain operation, and which is not always to be relied on as overpowering the dictates of a man's private interest; in all this I can discern nothing to discriminate their situation, from that of the subjects of any arbitrary monarch. There are, indeed, no statutes to inflict fine or corporal punishment at discretion; they have that benefit of the common law to which any stranger visiting the country is equally entitled, and from which, if shipwrecked on a foreign coast, they would not by
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the special interference of a legislature be precluded.

An argument will here be offered, which often has been advanced in that long season of misrule and criminal ill-policy, which preceded the late alleviation of our grievances; that the Roman Catholics possess civil liberty, the distinction between that and political power will delicately be laid down, and we shall hear it asserted, that whilst the one is not invaded, the other, a vain pageant, may be wanted without detriment. That is, if they have reason to believe that, without some alledged cause, they shall not be spoiled or imprisoned; if there exist no particular usage of sending a papist to the bastinado or the galleys, they may trust to the virtue, or rather to the convenience of others, that this custom of forbearance will not be violated. It has ever been deemed cruel oppression, that those who govern, separate their interest from those who submit. Is it in this case not to be considered an hardship? Is no attention to be paid to that experience, and that maxim which pronounces the hope vain, that civil rights shall be held secure, unless the enjoyment be guaranteed by a reasonable proportion of political liberty? without that, we hold our freedom but by connivance. He who advises, that the dearest concerns of his fellow citizens should lie at the mercy of the magistrate, or the multitude, reasons inaccurately on human nature, and proposes that rule for others, to which he would not readily submit his own interests. Would any man consent to hold by the permission of a minister, his property, or his life, his claim to a trial by jury, or to the benefit of the habeas corpus act? surely not; the confidence that these blessings are placed beyond the reach of power and encroachment of prerogative, gives to the British constitution that superior excellence, which Europe envies. To preserve inviolate this blessing, has been the motive to every conflict which the British people engaged in.

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The Roman Catholics possess at this instant no controul whatever over the imposition of taxes, and can scarcely ensure to themselves common respect, from the mean persons to whom the lowest departments of power are entrusted; what then do we gain by the bustle and cumbersome forms of a free government? a precarious exemption from injury, to be continued during the caprice of the many, and the convenience of the few, and held at best by no more secure tenure, than a fluctuating fashion of liberality; equal and probably more durable advantages are to be had from any civilized monarchy. We hear at every instant that power is a trust delegated to some, for the benefit of the whole; that government, and more especially the form we live under, is not a conspiracy to promote the emolument of a part, but a rational and extensive system of happiness to all its members; and who are you, who intrude between my interests and me, and aver that you are better qualified than myself to defend my happiness? No; if we are to serve, let our vassalage be qualified by the dignity of those who are to command us; let it be to an illustrious monarch: Let not one half of the nation claim it as a privilege of their faith, to be our task-masters. The cup of slavery, ever a bitter draught, is rendered more intolerable by the clumsy insolence of those who administer it. Thus should the Irish Catholics reason; but they should not content themselves with reasoning. There are breaches in the constitution accessible to a monied interest; in these should they fasten, on these intrench, and then tell their grievances with temperate, but unaccommodating fortitude. The lesson of liberality could not fail to prove instructive, if read to the minister by a few complying friends in parliament.

I shall in a proper place touch on the evil consequence of withholding from men the benefit of their good conduct, external reputation. It enters into
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this part of my essay, only to remark the severe tyranny which pursues a man to the judgment seat of his own heart, and there compels his feelings to execute the sentence of degradation. Plain men are never disgusted by the just pre-eminence of high station; difference of rank, then only creates disgust, when a distinction is made between persons mixing in the same society, and otherwise upon terms nearly equal. It never was the haughty demeanour of a Soubise or Montmorenci, that exasperated the people of France, and worked the present revolution. No; it was the beggar Count, and half-naked Chevalier; it was the arrogance of the *petite noblesse*, dispersed through country towns and subordinate departments, claiming superior title to royal favour and patronage. Certainly, most of the praise bestowed on the French men of figure and landed fortune, is well founded; but in the defence of that nobility, no account is taken of those, who, having no other claim to rank, but that derived from the vain distinction of a title, never omitted an occasion to reproach with their accidental precedence, men who equalled or exceeded them in merit or fortune; nearly similar is the situation of Ireland. The body of protestants is sufficiently numerous to assume an ascendant, not enough so to cut off competition. We have seen the fate of the noble oligarchy of France; it is not in the nature of things that the protestant democratic oligarchy of Ireland can have a very long duration.

C H A P. III.

The reasons upon which the Popery Laws are vindicated.

OF those who have treated this subject, to some, the original design of the Popery Laws appears prudential; in a country, they alledge, agitated by contending factions, a settlement could only be effected by strong exertions of authority; to such persons it might be replied, that this great end would have been more easily accomplished by modes of conciliation than of rigour; that the system favours of partiality rather than precaution; that the project of bestowing on one part of the community a monopoly of trusts, privileges, and emoluments, could never be just in any nation, or politic in a free one. But, as none more warmly than these writers, censure the continuance of burdensome and useless restrictions, which have obviously survived their meaning, I shall on this head abstain from controversy. It is of little moment to the point now in discussion, whether the act was of wisdom or of outrage, calmly digested in the cabinet, or imagined in the wantonness of civil victory. "I come to bury Cæsar, not to praise him." Let it apologize for the authors of the penal statutes against Papists, that they legislated according to the temper of the age they lived in; and that the code they have bequeathed to us, is not so much calculated to defame their memories, as to illustrate, by an additional example, the general imperfection of our nature, unhappily too eager to grasp at power, and seldom very temperate in the use of it.

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 " Clad in a little brief authority,
 " Plays such fantastic tricks."

On the most favourable construction, the persons who framed this system, must have only designed it a temporary expedient, until a more perfect arrangement could be established; and if I were simply to bind myself by these limits, and to shew that in the present tranquil and settled state of Ireland, the popery laws are useless, every purpose of my argument is answered.

I pass by as superficial invective, upon which no man of sense, experience, or information can reason; the charges of criminal principle and conduct, which mutually have been alledged and retorted; no religion ever sanctioned that which the law of nature reprobates; nay more, never did bonds of vice hold together any numerous society. One cannot sit down to justify what every soldier has done, or every pedant written. In the tumult of the reformation, as in all great conflicts, of which the point at issue is important, enormities were certainly perpetrated. If an alteration of dress, language, or jurisprudence, had been compelled by authority, parties of similar animosity would most probably have been generated. The contention would have been managed with equal vehemence, and accompanied with instances of violence no less atrocious; but he cannot be serious, or, if serious, he cannot be honest, who seeks for precedents of misgovernment in the annals of barbarous times, and cites authorities which, upon no other occasion, would be entertained for a moment, in order to glean together the scattered instances of misconduct; and on the acts of ferocious ages to ground a charge against the polished inhabitants of modern Europe. Persecution, the coarse expedient of an arrogant, unfeeling mind, which cuts the knot it should unravel, is not in any instance

to be justified; but, if a plea of extenuation may be offered, it comes, without doubt, on the side of the Roman Catholics. They maintained a system which had interwoven itself with their laws and prejudices, nay, with their very notions of the Divine Being, which had been delivered as venerable by their parents and instructors, and authenticated as they thought by tradition, and prescription immemorial. The doctrines too of the reformers attacked the temporal interests, and thus exasperated the feelings of many princes. If the courtesy of modern philosophy offers in excuse for the good Trajan, and benevolent Pliny, that the one enjoining, the other executing rigid methods of coercion against the first Christians, were misled by ignorance of what they punished, and by false ideas of obedience and piety, that they supposed the doctrines of this people interfered with their allegiance, and saw in their practice a supercilious contumely for the religion of their fathers; how is it possible to refuse a like apology, and for similar motives to the Sovereigns of the dark ages, unacquainted, like Trajan, with the tendency of the proposed innovations, but not like that Emperor, wise and enlightened. We pity the error and ignorance of our ancestors; we regret that literature had not softened their manners, subdued their fierce passions, and enlarged the sphere of intellect amongst them. But on him only can I look with amazement, who, at this day, will continue to propose barbarians for a model, and rely upon such precedents to countenance a dominion, inconsistent with every law of justice, and principle of liberty. If the old Church of Rome was that deluded and sanguinary monster her adversaries represent her, were they bound to recede only from her errors in speculation? were her errors in practice to be consecrated in

the new system of church establishment, or treasured in a safe repository, to serve upon occasion the Protestant government of Ireland.

There are other arguments more speciously urged, or at least which seem to have left more impression on the public mind, and on which I shall therefore bestow a closer criticism. It is alledged, that there is some lurking principle of evil, either in the doctrines or discipline of the Church of Rome, which tend to diminish a man's attachment to our free constitution, and to estrange his affections from the reigning family. That there are dormant claims of Roman Catholics, which they are likely to produce, if they acquire weight sufficient to make the demand with confidence; and which, if produced, must make the country a scene of wild confusion. Lastly, that as a dangerous rival to the establishment, it is not safe to countenance the Church of Rome, but safe to depress it by every means within the limits of common humanity. I conceive these objections are stated as strongly as they ever have been put. In giving the first, it was impossible to avoid the contradiction which it obviously contains. If the Roman Catholics were charged with a disposition to republicanism, it might account for their supposed antipathy to the Prince; or, if deemed extravagantly attached to the blood royal, we might consider the charge of indifference to liberty, as not utterly chimerical; but that they should at once fall out with the two contending members of the state, the monarchical and democratic parts of it! If their presumed dislike is never to be called into action, it is, I suppose, not worth commenting on. If it is to appear on the stage of politics, the spoil, which ever way won, must be given to enrich an enemy; either the powers of the crown must be contracted in favor of popular liberty, or the rights of the people beaten down to swell the triumph, and improve the property

perty of this hated prerogative. If such be the policy of Papists, feeble, unoperative, and ineffectual, trust them, in the name of heaven, with all the powers they demand. He is a shallow politician, to whom their machinations can be ever formidable.

Whilst there existed a Pretender to the crown, whose claim the Roman Catholics might be supposed to patronize, this absurdity was somewhat less paradoxical; but that pretext of suspicion is now removed; the romances of slander, with which the present age have been infested, have not dared to hint an insinuation so improbable. The race of the claimants is extinct; the pretensions antiquated, and not for a long time past acknowledged by the chief of the Romish religion. Even Scotland has acquiesced in the present settlement; and in that favoured nation, which has been much less punished than the Irish Roman Catholics, for proofs of attachment, incomparably more unequivocal, there is not now to be found a man, who either retains himself, or suspects in his neighbour an affection to the Stuart family.

It is indeed very difficult to suppose that three millions of men, although no better appointed, than with clubs and rustic implements, should for a century have submitted to a government, of which they mortally hated both the forms and administrators; and a government surely, not established on any project for procuring their happiness. Yet, not alone were the Roman Catholics tranquil under these circumstances, but they sustained the test of two dangerous rebellions; and, on a * third critical emergency, took arms to repel an enemy, who had usually afforded them refuge; and with whom their adversaries were fond to insinuate some latent connexion.

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* *The intended French invasion in the last war.*

We must not omit the gross and criminal absurdity of punishing a supposed disaffection, not manifested by any overt act; a velleity not discoverable in any part of this people's conduct; on the contrary, the Roman Catholics have on all occasions, loudly and strenuously proclaimed their affection for the reigning family; and they are to be credited, for their profession is consistent with reason and experience; and what is alledged in contradiction, is directly repugnant to both. Whilst they are debarred all intercourse with the constitution, who can demand of them more than phlegmatic approbation? To the Sovereign their feelings are, and ought to be more animated; pursued with pityless antipathy, under the throne the Roman Catholics sought protection. They were received with tenderness, and much mitigated of that rigorous doom which their country had denounced against them. A natural consequence ensued; the Roman Catholics became partizans of prerogative. Had the event been different, they had not been men; they had not possessed the ordinary emotions of a susceptible heart, nor the ordinary discernment of a penetrating understanding. But, from this very circumstance an argument of importance is to be adduced for the abolition of this preposterous jurisprudence, it opens an additional source of influence to the crown, and facilitates between the Sovereign and subject, a connexion incompatible with freedom, and which evil and interested men may abuse to the worst purposes. The people should wrest this jewel from the crown, but they should not bury it; two millions of men can never be viewed with indifference in the settlement of a nation; it is not to be expected, and less than ever, in the present age, that, like brutes, they may be guided at the fancy of their conductor. Let the democracy imitate for a salutary purpose, that plan of attention and meekness, which should be viewed in the executive power with jealousy, because

cause it is full of perils to us. It is surely not unworthy the notice of the friends of freedom to attempt a coalition with a large body of citizens, whose voice, if it were only to join, in the outcry of liberty, must be important; and that is not an idle or contemptible experiment, which ascertains whether men, who, in constitutional debates, must be courted, because they are numerous, incorrigibly persist in a whimsical predilection for implicit obedience; or may not be won even by their own interest, to espouse the cause of liberty, and be employed as useful auxiliaries under the banners of the constitution*.

I cannot comprehend how any man (not insane) should be suspected of gratuitously surrendering his liberty, rather than his fortune, or any other advantage. Certainly, a charge so contradictory to common sense, needs the corroboration of specific evidence. I do not see this evidence; it is not in the doctrines which the Church of Rome avows; it is not in the practice of the nations whom she has educated; I speak here of nations, not of cabinets, as to the despotism under which any Roman Catholic people has acquiesced, a similar accusation may be advanced against every religion upon earth; for there is not one, of which the adherents have not been at some period polluted by implicit submission to an arbitrary monarch, but in fact every despotism is a government of force, to which the subject yields involuntary obedience; and it might as well be inferred, that a man is a lunatic, because he is detained in a mad house, a that he is a favorer of despotism, for being compelled to live under

* *This idea might have been deemed almost visionary when it was delivered in the first edition. We have the satisfaction now to see it universally approved, and pretty generally adopted.*

under that form of government.* I will not dissemble, that the discipline of some of the reformed churches, seems better calculated to impress upon the mind those dispositions, which a friend to freedom might wish to improve and cherish. The philosopher, who delivers the plan of an imaginary republic, would be authorized to select his national religion from amongst them. This is not our object; we are not to consider what arrangement should be made, if the land were to be colonized anew; or what description of people would, in a new settlement, be most likely to deliver to their children a vigorous spirit of liberty, and to perpetuate a salutary system of equal privilege. We are to enquire how the materials we have at hand may be most serviceably employed in the edifice of constitution, we are desirous to erect; the nature of things is not to be altered. The experience of a century proves that violence cannot change the temper of men, or their opinions. Is the

** It has been alledged that the Church of Rome is intolerant. But religious intolerance, like the evils of government, here touched on, does not enter into the character of any people. It has been the act of the Sovereign and his advisers; men who ever pursue their own interests, and who in this, as in the other parts of their administration, hold in view some personal or temporary advantage. It is no more chargeable to the account of the people than the very despotism under which they suffer. Few are the communities in which the people are heard by their own voice, and enabled to deliver their genuine sentiments. Such is France at the present day; and, although some popular leaders may be infected with the vice of irreligion, the mass of the French people are Roman Catholics, and never was any measure more universally acceptable than this of universal toleration.*

the country then to be harrassed, because a large proportion of the inhabitants cannot be prevailed on to give up transubstantiation and purgatory, their respect for saints, and reverence of images? But why do we so often hear of the incompatibility of popery with freedom? We have the experience of ancient and modern times to prove, that the religion of the church of Rome by no means stifles the voice of nature, which calls for liberty, the divinity that stirs within us, to say we should be free. With this evidence before us, when it is admitted that the forms of the church of Rome are the least consonant to a democratic spirit, the argument only proves that so natural to man is the love of liberty, that it cannot by any biases, how strong soever be controuled, or perverted. Although desirous to maintain the strictest decorum, with regard to the establishment, and to treat of what concerns it with cautious tenderness; we are led into a comparison no way favourable to reformed episcopacy; it is the contrast of the obligations, which the constitution has to the Church of Rome; and the merits which the present Church dominant may plead, when called by the genius of Britain to account for its stewardship. It is strange that the partizans of the establishment can ever allude to a religion of freedom; if such is necessary, it cannot be the church of Ireland, nor any other that consecrates an hierarchy; it must be Presbyterianism, Socinianism, Independants; it must be Dissent, in some of its wildest shapes, and most eccentric modifications. To the general body of Dissenters the debt of the constitution is immense; we owe to them that the labours of past times were not effaced; that the noble Saxon edifice of the constitution was not levelled; we owe to them the awful spectacle of democratic justice, a culprit King, and an accusing people. Of nearly equal magnitude are the services rendered by the Roman Catholics, they gave the text, the bold com

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ment issued from the school of Calvin. In ages of popery we obtained our Magna Charta, our trial by jury, our representation in parliament, our right of popular impeachment. The Roman Catholics drew the outlines of liberty; many of its noblest features arose under their pencil; the masterly hand of Presbyterianism retouched the piece, revived some faded lineaments; and gave to the countenance an air of young and animated energy. We can scarcely allow to the Church of England the credit of retaining what it accidentally had acquired, without the strong curb of the sectaries, passive obedience, had at this hour been the current loyalty of these islands. It was the language of prelates, it was inculcated in pulpits, it was sanctioned by universities. During the reign of popery, resistance, we may presume, was taught, for it undoubtedly was practised. The evidence of history is certainly against the present establishment; but it is not too late to retrieve its character, much remains to be done ere the constitution of Ireland shall attain perfection. Let the church co-operate in the measures which are calculated to promote the general welfare of the nation. Happy should we be to see this charge of indolent acquiescence, refuted by such unquestionable testimony; and to be able to thank the establishment, any of these great designs were accomplished, to which the people of Ireland direct their views with anxious expectation.*

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* *There is at this day a Protestant Prelate, whose exemplary and conciliating conduct has endeared him to the Irish people. The instance is rare, not unprecedented. The good Bishop Bedel lived amidst the blessings, and died amidst the tears of the Irish Catholics.*

It is not strange that the animosity of party should still prevail in Ireland. It is the duty of every good man to lament the evil; it is the duty of those who have been enabled to rise superior to the absurd antipathy to expose its weakness, and its tendency. We are not above the third in descent from the exasperated foes who contended at the Boyne and Aughrim; and the Apostles of Freedom, who blessed us with constitution and commerce, have not been able to expel the viper prejudice, which had fattened and swoln in that season of calamity. The greater number seem to have attached some unaccountable fancy of their own to the expression, Freedom, as if to brow-beat Papists were the only privilege worth contending for. As members of the state, the Roman Catholics are intitled to privileges; they are additionally so as good citizens possessing a stake in the country; yet, when the claim is mentioned, an alarm rises, as if it were not a request timidly urged, and by suitors who have scarcely influence to obtain an hearing, but a general and sudden transfer of power, patronage and property from the hands which now possess them. If they are told of the benefits of equal freedom, of an extinction of parties, and men co-operating to one general purpose, the prosperity of their country, and of the empire, they come forward with that monster in politics, *their Protestant government*, long a favourite appellation, and which, if any idea is conveyed by the term, must be understood to express what the most common observation and vulgar intellect can refute, that the interest of the country is better consulted by permitting the ascendant of an oligarchy to prevail in it. No idea is more prevalent or more false, than that the revolution produced to Ireland the double advantage of relieving it from despotism in religion and politics; the fact is, that under King James the Irish contended for their liberties.

If he had succeeded, a free constitution was guaranteed to their country ; the establishment of a bad system of government was the effect of his overthrow. Never could any age or nation boast a more honourable band of Patriots, than the men who at that period took a lead in Irish politics. They clearly discerned, and honourably pursued the interests of their country. Let us coolly investigate their conduct ; and if measures, not men, are to obtain approbation, we shall find the merits of the Irish Roman Catholics far from inconsiderable, and not the less conspicuous, when contrasted with the shameful dereliction of their country's rights, by the *friends of freedom* who came after. When they engaged in the party of King James, the Irish Roman Catholics acted with a public spirited regard for the national interest. Even in England the settlement of the crown was difficult and delicate ; some of the most strenuous for correcting abuses hesitated at the bold infringement of hereditary succession ; some of the most virtuous men in the nation refused concurrence or even assent to it. If in a lettered country, among the luminaries of Europe, the question was pronounced full of hazard and perplexity, what must it have been, where the sword was still the only arbiter of right and wrong ? where abstruse political reasoning had never been touched on ; nor mention made of the metaphysic rules by which at this day all great decisions are regulated : But the Representatives of the Irish nation did not simply commit themselves upon a barren speculation. Instinctive loyalty, that amiable absurdity, which never warmed a heart inaccessible to noble virtues, attracted the people to the standard of a forlorn monarch, first of the blood royal, who for ages had appeared amongst them. The chiefs were not drawn by impulse to the field ; in England, they saw a settled policy to depress their country ; it was immaterial whether James deserv-

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ed well or ill of his British subjects, whilst unwilling to make common cause, England unquestionably deserved ill of us. Assembled in Parliament, with all constitutional solemnity, the Irish stipulated, as the price of their assistance, for a complete charter of legislative independance, and commercial freedom. That they were not supple courtiers, we have the evidence of James himself. " Commons, he exclaimed, " are every where the same," when they boldly questioned his prerogative, and censured his favourite Melfort. If they had been willing to consult their private interests, they might have obtained from William, enviable conditions of personal immunity and religious toleration; the temper of that Prince disposed him to mildness; and circumstanced as he then was, a crusade of religion was far from desirable. These are the persons, whom it is fashionable to depreciate, and upon whose supposed predilection for arbitrary government, a very serious accusation against the Roman Catholics is grounded. This is the band of patriots, whose acts were annulled, whose honours were cancelled, and whose names were vilified by the assembly, which expelled Molyneux, and condemned to the flames his case of Ireland. Upon this pile perished the Phoenix liberty, entombed for a century, it has again revived among us; shall we by our bickerings disgust the lovely stranger, and scare it back by the view of our unworthy jealousies into its urn.

It is not for us at this day to lament the event of that conflict; we should discriminate between that, which is the advantage of the Empire, and of a particular part compelled to follow a distinct interest. I apologize not for King James, but for those who were well authorized to turn his misfortunes, nay, his vices and his crimes, to the profit of their country. Ireland is now admitted into a partnership in that constitution, which wanted to perfect it,
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the correction and example of a revolution. But the Roman Catholics of the last century, possessed not the gift of second sight; they could not foresee, that a complication of fortuitous events, should in the lapse of a century, unfold to posterity the prospect of a system of liberty, far superior to what was at that day attainable. That golden opportunity should again return, that lucky crisis, in the affairs of nations, as of individuals, which if suffered to elapse, is to be recovered with so much difficulty. They had no Merlin to predict, that the season of emergency, when the aid of every virtue, and of every talent was requisite, should be blessed with a rich harvest of exalted characters; men, whom no difficulty could discourage, no peril intimidate; whom corruption, flattery or influence could never deturn from their steady purpose; men, to whose moderation their country is not less indebted than to their intrepidity, their wisdom and their eloquence; by the effect of whose healing counsels we can contemplate with satisfaction, that Liberty, of which the triumph in other countries is marked with havoc and desolation, marched in Ireland with bloodless and peaceable ovation to her throne. We have seen this fortunate æra, whilst England, as she then did, treats us with fraternal affection, we glory in the common name of Briton. But little estimable is he, in whose breast the duty he owes his country does not rise superior to every more remote obligation; who would not, if driven by wicked men to the melancholy necessity of resistance, imitate the example of our ill-fated predecessors, and cause even the proudest distinctions to merge in the still more fond and endearing appellation of Irishman.

The next objection, that which supposes the tenures of property in Ireland, not sufficiently confirmed, although speciously produced, and well calculated for its object, to sow dissension, and excite

the alarm, is not better fortified against investigation. It is refuted by every deed of mortgage and conveyance, which has been passed in Ireland since the Restoration. It is even hardly to be supposed that a person in high station, who gave not a little weight to the assertion, could have been serious. If he was, he must have admitted his immediate ancestor to have been a simpleton, and said little for his own wisdom in the disposal of his fortune. If the landed property of Ireland was not securely held, no man of sense could think to purchase or settle in the country; it should be considered as not much better than Turkey, where the Sultan is every man's heir; and only as a convenient station for procuring wealth, as India is by the servants of the company; and Ireland itself, by the ministers of passage, who occasionally visit it. It would indeed seem that these latter gentlemen are the only persons who have discovered the real situation of the country. I should scarcely expect to receive a serious answer from a man, if, whilst he had within his reach the solid security of the English funds, I should recommend to him to purchase in a country, of which all the tenures are to be questioned, when an event the most likely and desirable shall take place, that the people shall become more free, and the yeomanry more comfortable. Immediately at the Restoration, when the claims were recent, the claimants alive, with their merits, and a vast deal of power to plead for them, it was found impossible to dispossess the new proprietors. In the parliament held by King James, when the aggrieved party was in the plenitude of authority, the matter was taken up with delicacy, and most cautiously proceeded on.* There never was in any civilized country

* It was proposed by King James's Parliament to revive the court of claims, which had been discontinued,

country an instance of a reassumption of lands long possessed, or which had been the subject of civil contracts; is it then possible that any man who has observed the influence of even recently acquired property, can be serious in his hypothesis? that after a century and half of peaceable possession, fortified in their claim by the long list of connexions, creditors, tenants, and dependants, the landed interest of Ireland should have so little weight that a government would attempt, or so little strength, that a government dare attempt, to change the possession of the country, and compliment with their spoil an handful of neglected beggars.*

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to discriminate between those who merited to forfeit for their rebellion and the persons dispossessed, by Cromwell; and to reimburse all the Debenturers whom it should be found necessary to eject.

* To my original argument (1st edition) on this subject, I must add that the present settlement is guaranteed by England, and that on account of the absentee rents, England has just the same inducements to preserve the inheritance of the present landed proprietors, which she has to keep her sugar islands, or any other possession; the following requisites are therefore indispensably necessary, that the alteration should be effected. First, That the Roman Catholics should have an interest to produce this revolution; that is, that no men should acquire property under the present settlement, but the direct heirs of the old forfeitors. Secondly, That they should become a majority of electors. Thirdly, That they should become a majority of representatives. Fourthly, That the present peerage should become extinct, or return to the Church of Rome. Fifthly, That the peers should have an interest in the reassumption. Sixthly, That the King should be disposed to sanction it. Seventhly, That the English nation, including the absentees, should be inclined to permit him. It may be necessary to inform
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But who are to be the actors in this revolution; and by what event is it likely to be facilitated? By the acquisition of new power and consequence to the Roman Catholics; that is, men who have borne without a murmur, the oppressions of a severe government; are at the instant their situation becomes tolerable, to create a confusion, which despair could not have prompted; and to expend their ready money on the acquisition of property, without any motive whatever, but that they may
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those who are unacquainted with the internal state of Ireland, that the first three requisites are as difficult to be accomplished as the latter ones. Five sixths of the Irish Catholics hold their property under the act of settlement, either as possessors of land, mortgagees or creditors; and not one in a thousand represents a forfeiting family. The Roman Catholic property of Ireland, both real and personal, is so far inferior to that of Protestants, that in order to give the former an electioneering influence, it would require some centuries during which Protestants alone should alienate, and Catholics alone have the opportunity of acquiring. This extends but to counties and free cities; the boroughs are then to be gained, a work of more centuries. It would furnish matter for a curious speculation to consider what new interpretation of the gospel might arise in that space of time to supersede the present distinctions. It may also be necessary to acquaint the same class of readers, that those Catholics who have purchased under the late mitigation of this tyranny, have indiscriminately expended their money on old and new titles, and what proves to demonstration, that the titles are unquestionable, the lands acquired under the forfeitures of the last century bring at market the same price as the grants of Henry the Second, the oldest titles known in Ireland. Indeed on the purchase of an estate, no man enquires whether the tenure is by the act of settlement, or prior to that period.

be able to cast it into a scramble, to be seized at random, by the most fortunate and enterprising. I can see no method, by which the Roman Catholics can in this country acquire influence, or property, unless under the present settlement; and they must be more enthusiastic in their notions of right, than any people whom history has recorded; if, after having obtained independence by the ordinary means, they would embark in the sea of civil commotion; and not prefer rather to enjoy the ease and certain property they possess, than unsettle the entire nation, for what is likely to become the emolument of another. It is not, I presume, to be understood, that every man, whom accident or parsimony has brought to the possession of wealth, must, because he professes their religion, have of consequence a direct claim of inheritance under the old forfeitors. If such an opinion prevails, it is erroneous. The vanity of many new families may be soothed by an attempt to trace their lineage to this venerable stock. But there certainly are not at this moment, five hundred Roman Catholics in Ireland, who, if a court of claims was established, could by authentic document satisfy their judges, that a patrimony, except for the accident of forfeiture, ought to have devolved upon them. Many of these suffering families have languished in want, and pined into oblivion. Many sought refuge with their unhappy leader at the Revolution; others have conformed to the establishment, and constitute at present a very distinguished * portion of the Church of Ireland. These, I hope, as the law entertains no jealousy of them, are not to be counted against the Roman Catholics. I am ashamed to have dwelt so long on a frivolous objection, which supposes that it requires but the interference

* Some of this description are among the strenuous opposers of that great national question, the Catholic emancipation.

interference of a few powerful chiefs, to change the property of a country. The claim of the Irish forfeitors is at this day chimerical and antiquated. Our grandfathers do not recollect the change, our fathers found the island settled in tranquillity; and all the solemn laws and compacts of our state, must be but as transitory, and ineffectual shadows, in the eyes of him, who supposes this settlement may be violated. The present land-holders of Ireland may rest at ease; they have as little reason to apprehend disturbance from the old proprietors, as from these still prior occupants of the soil, the wolf dogs.

C H A P. IV.

The Establishment.

THE effects of the proposed 'repeal, on the interests of the established Church, deserve a distinct consideration. I will not say, reasoning on the abstract question of right, that any establishment ought to be set in competition, with the interests of a people; it would certainly be just to render to every man, that which belongs to him; and leave to heaven, whom they profess to honour, the care and security of religious establishment. But passion and interest sway more in society, than rules of abstract justice. We cannot expect that men having in their hands the power to confer kindness, or offer injury, will refrain from the one, or prevent the other, unless the act to their own concerns, be proved advantageous, or at least indifferent. It is reasonable on the subject of this demand to quiet the alarm of the Clergy, and the more so, as the task of giving satisfaction is by no means difficult. Far from supposing it unsafe for the Clergy of this, or any other established Church, that the subordinate sects should enjoy the most perfect liberty; I would recommend it as a measure of correct and sagacious policy to remove every disqualification, by which the great body of the people is affected. For the mere pre-eminence of ecclesiastics, none but bigots will contend, and these in numbers too inconsiderable to excite apprehension. But where the more solid advantages of society are withheld; where men are provoked by idle experiments on their pride, or their patience, the most moderate will be induced to make

make common cause, and an haughty hierarchy will be sometimes levelled, in a common slaughter of oppressive pretensions. In the present state of Europe, whilst there occur so many inducements to speculation, whilst the public mind is so ripe for enquiry, unless the free press, and parliamentary constitution be abrogated in Ireland, the Roman Catholics must perceive, that by possessing the advantages and immunities of a British subject, they should become more respected, more secure, and more happy. If they enquire, why is this condition denied to them? and learn that the establishment is the author of their degradation. That they suffer an unjust, and unqualified disfranchisement, merely because the favoured religion chuses to indulge in ill founded apprehensions, and inflicts this penalty, lest it might be incommoded by their freedom. They must necessarily confound in common antipathy, the evil, and the cause of it. Great allowances are to be made for the anxiety of the Clergy; it is natural, that those who hold property, should cautiously weigh whatever is represented to interfere with their possessions; on no other occasion are the feelings of men so exquisitely alive, nor do we recoil from the rude touch of reform, with more sensitive irritability. But, let us entreat the body of Irish ecclesiastics to proceed one step further, and to enquire from their quick sensibility, whether he who enjoys wealth, does not feel an earnestness to retain it? the answer will probably be in the affirmative, and they will be convinced by the most decisive evidence, the testimony of their senses, that even in the cause of the Church, a Roman Catholic, unless he is more attached to his religion than they are, is very little likely to endanger his fortune. It is not I presume, by a wish, or magic incantation that an establishment, fenced by laws, and upheld by power, is to be

be subverted. The Church of Ireland is defended by a large over-proportion of the property of the nation, which is in the possession of its zealous votaries; it is guaranteed by England, and protected by the jealousy of all descriptions of Protestants, who would certainly combine to prevent a translation of power to the Roman hierarchy. They who attack this well secured establishment, must dispose themselves to encounter a formidable opposition, the Protestants of Ireland, backed by the unanimous concurrence of Great Britain. And who, let me ask, are these frantic Papists, who, if they enjoy the comforts of life, and a competent share in the best government existing, will commit their fortunes and lives, the hopes of their children, and prosperity of their country on the event of a silly conflict for tithes and bishoprics? The natural strength of the Catholics has been over-borne for a century, and the powers which have so long depressed it, are still competent to produce the same effect. When it is alledged, that if restored to the privileges of free citizens, they would not submit to the precedency of the established Church; we argue as if their propensity to commotion was to increase, in proportion as their motives were removed, and that they should begin to disturb the public tranquillity, merely because they had an additional interest to preserve it. The hypothesis is exactly this, that men, who already have been forced to submit to every species of privation, should arm at the instant all inducement to hostility had ceased, and fly madly from the banquet of freedom, to which they had been invited, into an enterprize, calculated only to gratify their vanity.

I will not suppose the Roman Catholics so widely to differ from the rest of men, that they would not wish, if a wish could effect the purpose, to see their own party prevail, and their own liturgy universally attended to. I know, that in the character of that sect, there enters no stronger disposition, than that

that of reverence to their Clergy; and that many articles, both of doctrine, and discipline, have a tendency to confirm this sentiment. When I assert that the abolition of the Popery laws can not affect the establishment, I do not ground my argument on any supposed forbearance of the Roman Catholics, such presumption must be either weak, or disingenuous. I reason on the utter impossibility, that any attempt against the establishment should prove successful. In order that an alteration should be effected, it must, as before, come recommended by England; or Ireland, in point of number and territorial influence must nearly be unanimous. When five-sixths of the landholders were rigid Roman Catholics; in defiance of the most strenuous opposition, the English liturgy was introduced, the old Clergy ejected, and the reformation triumphantly established. Nay, more, aided by England, the Protestants, at that time intruders, were enabled to rob their adversaries of power and of privilege, and to deface every trait which might denote their lineage from a free people. When freedom and property were the stake, you buffeted them at your fancy; and now when the risk is only of precedence, for which none but persons of weak capacity would expose themselves; as if conscious that religion was not sufficient to create discontent, we cast ambition and interest into the scale, we fetter down our vigorous and youthful country, soaring with an eagle wing into the boldest flights of aggrandizement, and pursuing with an eagle eye the animating sun of freedom; and for what? for a vision of danger, to be realized but in the remote lapse of centuries, and by a coincidence of events chimerical even in prospect, that England should be reconciled to the See of Rome, and the race of Irish Protestants extinct or beggared. With equal justice, and much sounder policy, our legislature should extend its

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care to the dominion of Saints, and provide for the security of Protestantism in the milenium. Similar arguments were used to elude the repeal of those scandalous statutes which scarcely left to us the benefit of air and water. They were advanced alike when it was proposed to repeal the test act. On both occasions the nation was warned against the dangers of rivalship; on both occasions the caution was treated with contempt, and the country has prospered under the salutary measures which were adopted. By this consideration the advocates of intolerance might be induced to relax somewhat of their opposition. Notwithstanding every apprehension, the reformed Dissenters are not at this day more powerful than they were fourteen years back; and if danger could be apprehended from any, it must rather have been from the Presbyterians; they have a powerful party in England and Scotland at their side unanimous. The Roman Catholics, unless they can influence Saints and Martyrs in their cause, seem little likely to procure auxiliaries. If the Church of Ireland wishes to rival the Romish Clergy in popularity, it ought to commence by proofs of condescension: Certain it is, that he who possesses pre-eminence and authority, if he bear the one with meekness, and exercise the other in clemency, starts in the competition with infinite advantages. A consequence directly contrary may be expected to ensue, where pre-eminence is haughtily maintained, and superiority wielded as a rod of iron. Hence in every country the disinclination of subordinate sects to the Church dominant, a disinclination which mistating facts, and misapplying experience, we usually attribute to the motives of dissent, not to the circumstances to which dissent gives origin.

I have, I hope, been very explicit in my proofs; that the established church can have no advantage in promoting the continuance of these statutes.

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In the days of most extravagant enthusiasm, never did the bare interests of the clergy draw any description of religionists into competition with their rulers. I proceed further to prove that it is the duty of the established hierarchy, as it tenders what it must suppose the cause of truth, to set an example to the universe of unlimited toleration. Every argument which can be used to justify the coercion of Roman Catholics in this country, may be equally applied to its own case in a nation adhering to the Church of Rome, or to any other system of religious worship. The safety of establishments, if once admitted to depend on persecution, may be alledged as a pretext, for the inquisition, or any measure of severity, the discretion of a legislature shall think convenient; what is then the immediate consequence of their obstinacy! they warrant the persecution of every Protestant in Europe. There are those who affect the ostentatious title of patrons and defenders of the Church of Ireland; if such persons feel that the doctrines they so warmly espouse bear the evidence of truth, why not commence the glorious work of toleration; they by doing so, unbar to their doctrines the gates of every nation, and clear the way for the admission of true religion into the countries in which it is prohibited. They will remove from the church, to which they profess attachment, an imputation that must ever be affixed in the minds of plain observers, that force is a substitute employed to supply the dearth of argument; and that if any more happy expedient could be used to produce conviction, they should not propagate their doctrines by pecuniary rewards and punishments. Such language certainly cannot in the present form of things be reprehended; it is encouraged by the laws of Ireland. It has been encouraged by zealots, who have ventured to declare, that although the first convert

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might be not sincere in his professions, his posterity will at length be confirmed in the opinions of the reformation. Will the national clergy submit to this imputation ; that, unlike the primitive church, of which the seed was the blood of Martyrs, the foundation of the church of Ireland should be laid in hypocrisy, and that it requires two or three generations of prevarication, and apostacy, to procure to the land the blessing of a good Protestant ?

C H A P. V.

Of the dangers to the constitution from the Popery Laws, and the general impropriety in a free state of such restrictions.

REASONING on the Popery Laws with a reference to the constitution, a capital objection presents itself: In every free state the supreme magistrate is the object of jealousy; his powers of action are more concentrated, his interest in the ruin of freedom more immediate. The patriot statesman marks his conduct with vigilance, dexterously pursues the secret motives of action, and exerts the utmost activity to counteract his enterprizes; but in this instance, the system of controuls is inverted. The check is imposed upon the people for the advantage of the Monarch, not upon the Sovereign in behalf of the people.

There never existed a country in which an high democratic spirit among the people was more necessary than in Ireland; we have to contend not alone with the influence and prerogative of the crown, which naturally are great; our executive government is managed under the direction of those, who conduct the business of a more powerful nation. If competition occurs, England, as more important to the common minister, will be preferred. In every case, as remote from his concerns, and, as not including the objects of his hopes and fears, we shall be less attended to; we have moreover to guard against the jealousy a commerical people is apt to entertain of what is deemed a rival. The spirit of encroachment that is natural to man, the propensity to domineer that is natural to England.

It is not sufficient to secure our liberty by laws; laws are but parchment chains without a vigour of public character, which renders it dreadful to infringe them. How has this precept of common reason been complied with; the minds of a great portion of the people have been emasculated. It was natural to suppose that the English minister would tamper with the great, and these in turn endeavour to debauch the people. The number to be gained is an impediment to corruption; if they are but few, the means are facilitated. What was the wisdom of Ireland, when it was our duty to send round every neighbouring coast to enquire, who was willing to take a share in the support of our liberty, by accepting the elective franchise? We, as if to remove every obstacle to corruption, limited the right of voting to about one-tenth of the inhabitants, and these so cantoned that they do not produce the effect of one-fiftieth.

Indeed, so repugnant to the genius and principles of Liberty are these restrictions, that, to a person who considers the Irish nation anxious to retain liberty, every article must appear an act of infatuation. If it were possible that a race of beings could exist, debased, degenerate, and so unlike the common character of man, as to deem the regulation of their own actions a toil, and should systematically prefer to hold their lives and fortunes from the caprice of a monarch, rather than by the liberal security which the British constitution offers; if we could suppose that any climate, manners, or institutions, could thus warp, and pervert the human mind from its accustomed tenor of thought and action, and that this vilified order of wretches were the Roman Catholics of Great Britain and Ireland; an alien observer, indifferent in the choice of parties, would thus be induced to describe and reason on this part of our government. On the British islands, the favour of heaven has bestowed the best government,

government, and the most perfect system of civil liberty, which has yet been established. Of this invaluable boon the possessors are justly tenacious. It is the strength, and ornament of their country. A doubt has arisen whether one description of citizens are in this cause alike zealous as their fellows, without examining the merits of the charge, by the most obvious evidences; without considering whether it is admitted by their professions, justified by their interests, or corroborated by their passions. A sentence of degradation is awarded, the most rigorous doom a nation can denounce. Heedless of the general character of man, placable by kindness, unaccommodating under harsh exertions of authority, it is not endeavoured by conciliatory methods to change their perverse nature; but they are alienated still more, by being absolutely deprived of every inducement to repentance. In a limited monarchy, the Sovereign is an object of attention and mistrust, yet to his custody do they commit these formidable culprits; thus facilitating to him the means of influence, and extending the connexion of intercourse and dependance. Upon the easiest terms, simply by abstaining from injury, an aspiring Monarch may at any time ingratiate himself with this numerous body. An ostentatious parade of clemency binds them to his cause by affection and interest. Thus, of every mode that could be devised for managing a people suspected of disaffection, the most improper was adopted; they are permitted to acquire the influence of wealth, and almost enjoined to direct that important engine against the liberties of their country; they are in a free state marked out as improper guardians of the public welfare. Is it then surprizing that they want ardour to support that freedom, from any participation in which they are sedulously excluded? The cause of astonishment should rather be, that no sovereign has yet appeared so criminally bold as to seize

seize this dangerous instrument of influence, and wield it with effect against the liberties of his country. But let the people of Ireland beware, there are many inducements to undermine their rights, and they have no reason to suppose that there will be wanting agents and advisers for such a measure. Competition for the crown has long ceased; already the relation between the sovereign and people is essentially altered. These are facts within our own memory, which sufficiently prove that the reigning family are not considered utterly dependant on the usual supporters of their greatness. Thanks to the virtues of those by whom we are likely to be governed, we can indulge the pleasing vision of a patriot reign. Such dangers are remote, but not impossible. No royal family would deem the comparison degrading, to hear that a spirit like that of Lewis XIV. restless, haughty, enterprising and ambitious, may animate some of their posterity; and I know of no security to the state that the deep, judicious policy of Richelieu, may not successfully be imitated by future ministers.

It would not be an ill-grounded supposition, if such a person proceeded still further, to consider the popery laws as a system devised, to prepare for absolute monarchy. Certainly every interest and every passion of the Roman Catholics ought, if their passions and interests have a common operation, to lead them to co-operate in such an establishment. Their interest, for enjoying no common benefit of a free constitution, they can have no common concern to promote it, and in the universal debasement of despotism, they could expect more impartial attentions. Their passions, it is the nature of man, to resist dominion, to desire equality; the suspicious must ever expect to be reluctantly served, want of confidence diminishes the anxiety to deserve it. In the political, not less than in the moral world, to infringe on reputation is severe,
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and brings with it a necessary consequence, depravity. I have touched before on the injustice, it is my province here to remark the impolicy of such suspicion; indeed throughout this entire system these defects go hand in hand, want of common justice is blended with want of common prudence. If the Roman Catholics were such as they have been represented, incorrigibly culpable in their political opinions and attachments, the bonds imposed are insufficient for the security of the state; they should not be fettered, but exterminated. If liberty is to be preserved, a blessing fondly cherished, and purchased with so much hazard, the Roman Catholics of Ireland are too strong or too weak, possessed of too much strength, if they are to be deemed enemies; far too feeble, if to be expected as auxiliaries; every argument urged against them applies with more efficacy to a sentence of universal massacre. Reputation rewards the labour of the generous mind, and encourages the lukewarm to praiseworthy actions. It should not on trivial or frivolous pretexts be withheld, and men solemnly and publicly proclaimed objects of mistrust to their fellow citizens. If attachment is precarious, these are not the means of conciliation, nor is it thus fidelity is to be recalled when it wavers. Consult the common occurrences of life; the tale of calamity, in which all the woes, and all the arrogance of men are recorded, you will there learn what an awful sentence is that, which infringes upon a good name; how frequently if accident, or trivial sins against established order, expose the amiable and innocent to the judgment of the world, and to the bitter sentence of exclusion, so often uttered at that haughty tribunal; even they, degraded in their own and in the public estimation, and thus deprived of the strongest incentive to good conduct, sink into the debasement which malevolence had prepared for them. In this observation there is enough of man's
general

general character to justify the application to political as well as moral conduct.

There is another laudable prepossession to which perhaps still more than to the sense of shame, we may confide our preservation. That self-importance which attaches to every individual of a free state; that sense of honour, and shame of dereliction, which holds the sentinel to his post; which confirms the virtue, and even invigorates the industry of a free people; I need not seek recondite evidence to support this fact, that man thrives in the garden of freedom; I might cite the authorities of travellers, and call to witness every person who has observed the difference of manners in the nations round us. The dejected aspect of despotism, its gloomy and desponding visage, its sluggard air and slovenly attire, the contrast of chearful and sprightly comfort, where the stamp of government is different; I shall take my proofs from the land we live in; it unhappily furnishes them in sufficient abundance, to evince, that in order completely to sink him in his own opinion, it is not necessary that a man should feel the lash of authority, or see the hand uplifted to inflict it. I illustrate my opinion by the contrast of character in the English and Irish peasantry; of the English, bold, enterprising and industrious, erect with honest pride, and conscious independance; of the Irish, servile, spiritless and sluggish, dragging their chain in hopeless despondency, and submitting to indignities, which give the dominion of their petty tyrants not a little the resemblance of a gang of slaves and their insolent overseer. The Englishman, at the approach of insult, or menace of danger, flies into the sacred sanctuary of justice; it is ever open as the paternal mansion to a favourite child; he is not, like the wretched cottager of Ireland, rebuffed with the contumely of a changeling or an outcast. I illustrate it still more by the contrast of character in the north,

north and south of Ireland; of the north, the parent of freedom, and nurse of public spirit; from which has originated every manly thought, every bold exertion, and enlightened principle. Indeed in the south, the comparison may be drawn still closer; the disparity is not more fairly marked between any two races of men on earth, than between the Protestants and Roman Catholics of nearly the same rank in humble life, not distinguished by any physical or moral difference, save only that the former feel a consciousness of superiority; and that the occasional exercise of the elective franchise contributes to cherish and to confirm this sentiment. I will be told that this right can give but small importance. It is true; but yet "these little things are great to little men;" it is sufficient for their state in life, and has the full effect upon their principles and conduct.

I anticipate an objection that will arise from the state of representation. It will be alledged that the means of procuring influence at elections will be facilitated, when the disqualification of religion is removed, and the number of those increased who are capable of accepting freeholds. Exactly the reverse. Admitting Roman Catholics to vote at county elections, would, in fact, prove a most unexceptionable plan of Parliamentary Reform. It is the great evil of this country, and that which vitiates the entire system of representation, that the right of suffrage is not enjoyed by a sufficient number; in proportion as the number of electors are limited, the election is itself less free, because men of rank can predominate more by the weight of their connexions and dependants. If this fact needs confirmation, you have the evidence in the contrast of great commercial cities with small potwalloping boroughs; the Scotch counties have each but few freeholders, and scarcely in one of them is the representative returned by any thing like a free choice; on the contrary, in

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the counties of England the electors are numerous, the representation is repeatedly altered, and the representative at all times held in awe of his constituents. By enabling the Roman Catholics to vote, the use of occasional freeholders will nearly be abolished. It would be a waste of money to make but few, and no fortune could bear the expence of a sufficient number to create any very decided influence. The independant Roman Catholics would form an admirable recruit to the popular interest in counties, and the effect of the entire alteration would be to render the gentry better landlords; to extend more widely the controul of property over power; to enlist a numerous body of auxiliaries under the banners of freedom, and incorporate them with the veteran guards and forces of the constitution.*

And

* “ It may appear at first sight of little consequence
 “ whether persons in common ranks of life enjoy any
 “ share of political liberty or not. But without this
 “ there cannot be that persuasion of independance,
 “ which alone can encourage a man to make great ex-
 “ ertions. A man who is sensible that he is at the
 “ disposal of others, over whose conduct he has no
 “ controul, has always some unknown evil to dread.
 “ He will be afraid of attracting the notice of his
 “ superior, and must feel himself a mean and degraded
 “ being. But a sense of liberty, and knowledge of the
 “ laws, by which his conduct must be governed, with
 “ some degree of controul over those who make and ad-
 “ minister the laws, gives him a constant feeling of
 “ his own importance, and leads him to indulge in a
 “ free and manly turn of thinking, which makes him
 “ greatly superior to what he would have been under
 “ an arbitrary form of government.” Priestly on Ge-
 neral Policy. It might be almost believed that this
 illustrious writer had Ireland in view, when he ex-
 pressed these sentiments.

And what are all the arguments against this complete manumission? Have they not been already urged to prevent the former alteration of the acts of parliament against popery; and the experience of above thirteen years has amply and happily refuted them. But cogent indeed are the arguments which warrant the measure; we are cajoled by feigned apprehensions of the Pope, when in fact our watchfulness should be of our ministers: they are present and powerful, he feeble and remote. Does any man in his senses suppose that the Roman Catholics would embroil themselves with the Protestants of Ireland, or draw down the force of England upon their heads, to make a pope their monarch, or a cardinal their viceroy? This is not the age for such attempts, or such speculations; the pretensions of his holiness are as little likely to disturb the future tranquillity of Ireland, as those of the Turk and devil, with whom it not long since was the fashion to combine him. But we complain, and the evil is at our doors, that administration is not responsible to parliament; that parliament itself is not responsible to the people. Can we expect it should be otherwise? The name of people is profaned; it is usurped by a committee of the nation, who coalesce with the great, bartering the right to govern themselves for permission to exercise a pernicious authority over their fellows. They are not attended to, because when they speak, they come not accompanied by the dignity of national property, and the energy of national population. The majesty of the Irish people is dethroned; it is preserved but as a pretender, and only produced when occasion requires to intimidate the sovereign; served, indeed, with great external professions of decorum, but knocked on the head, if any effort to improve its condition should be attempted.

Public men in this country are not compelled to look downwards; the great are suffered to separate their interest from that of the people. They do not owe their parliamentary situations to popular favor; they are returned, either because they have at their disposal boroughs consisting of eight or ten electors, nominated by themselves; or that they have under their own controul, and that of their close friends, such a number of dependant Protestants as will out poll at a county election, the public spirited freeholders. In many counties of the south, 30,000 male inhabitants have their representatives named by about 1500 Protestants. If every inhabitant possessing a certain actual property was authorized to vote, it would be useless to secure the dependance of a few, and no private fortune could bear the expence of influencing a number sufficient to create a majority. But where a man of fortune can procure one hundred poor Protestants to become his dependants, the political consequence he derives from possessing one fifteenth of the county representation, compensates for the expenditure by which he procures it. Add to this the natural influence of such a person with tenants, neighbours and tradesmen, and the power of providing for friends in the army, revenue, and subordinate public offices, it is not too much to say, that he will possess at his complete disposal from one-third to one-fifth of the representation of the county. If two or three of this order unite, even the shadow of popular choice is taken away. What must it then be, where the number of electors in the same extent of population does not amount to above three or four hundred? In fact, there are few or no popular elections in Ireland. The power of placing a man in parliament is a monopoly openly trafficked, even in places which are not basely corrupt or abjectly dependant; what is called the election, is but a septennial lawsuit between a few great families, which of them shall for seven years enjoy

enjoy the importance and patronage usually attached to a seat in Parliament. If that be fact, which makes the common topic of conversation in Ireland, that public men do not consult the public interest; if it is a correct explanation of that conduct, that the electors not being sufficiently numerous, elections are not sufficiently popular; that a very large proportion of them are independant of the people, and that this is a consequence of the thralldom of the Catholics, the entire argument resolves itself into this question; can the emancipation of that body produce any inconvenience, equal to that which now arises from their bondage? I address myself to the common understanding of the age, not to its philosophy or benevolence.

So obvious and easy is this remedy, that I am astonished in the schemes of parliamentary reform repeatedly produced, it has been passed over in silence. We desire that a new portion of health may be infused into the constitution, and neglecting the medicinal current that runs by our door, we seek a restorative from distant springs, and from the untried drug of every visionary empiric. It is impossible not to observe with how much ease the patriots of this country have repeatedly sate down to the work of reformation, no more advert-ing to the claims of their fellow-citizens, than if such men were not in existence, or existed but as vagrant Tartars, who had been enticed by the chearful face of the country to settle themselves for a season, ready at the return of summer to retire with equal precipitation.

Thus for the complete security of our moderate and happy government, it is expedient to restore every right to the Roman Catholics. I do not conceive how any can call this country free, when conscience, the most sacred of human rights, is restricted. I shall confine myself to that, which pleading for the constitution, is most applicable to the subject; restore
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to the Roman Catholics what they never ought to have lost, for they never were the tools of power, the elective franchise. To the men of influence, the effect of this act of justice must be, that they are by their interest bound to support the constitution. To the other orders it is to be offered as the reward of industry, as the enlivening principle which gives energy to active enterprize, which gives security to moderate means ; because it gives vigour to repel encroachment. Every Roman Catholic is not to be made a Minister of State ; nor every insolvent labourer to be taken into the firm of the constitution ; but let every Irishman be taught, what every Englishman is taught to feel, that besides want of application, or of œconomy, there is no impediment to bar him from the acquisition of that protecting and recommendatory right, by which he is enabled to resist the violence, to conciliate the regard, or to molify the arrogance of his immediate superior.

And this in fact is the master grievance of Ireland, that there are so many temptations to oppress the tenant, and so few inducements to protect him. The advantages of government are not extended to the lower walks of humble life. The laws against Catholics (must I profane the sacred name of law, by thus denominating that system of brutal, bigotted, and tyrannizing monopoly,) produce the double mischief of individual hardship, and general calamity ; the operation of them, like that of their great prototype, the ancient forest laws, is to depopulate the country. We have given proofs of their baneful effects upon the constitution, that by limiting the number of electors, the basis upon which freedom rests is injudiciously narrowed, and the means of corruption by consequence facilitated. So far the evil recoils upon those who uphold it ; but the disfranchisement of the great body of the Irish people, retards the cultivation and natural improvement

ment of the Island. Such must ever be the effect of a government founded on partiality. Those who are the objects of preference are not necessitated; the unfavored part of the nation are not encouraged to cultivate. This backwardness of the country will by some be imputed to indigenous indolence; but the vice of indolence is itself symptomatic of a bad government: It is notoriously caused in Ireland by the defective organization of society; for the persons who at home fall under this imputation, when they emigrate, are indefatigable and industrious. It is the natural ambition of landed proprietors to seek an electioneering influence in their respective counties; they are dependant for it upon their protestant tenantry, and to them their cares and attentions are restricted. The remainder, who ought to constitute an useful body of husbandmen, are not protected against the rapacity and insolence of those, whether of their own or of the other religions, who are casually placed over them, they are not induced to take an interest in the toil and to improve it. If they were so induced, they have not vigour of character to undertake the enterprize. They are dependant, because they want every species of consequence; and, because dependant, they are neglected*. Look upon the chart of Ireland, and it will appear more conspicuous, that this want of tone in the character of the Irish peasantry, which in certain districts is too observable, proceeds

** To this rage for procuring county influence is to be attributed the uncultivated state of many improveable tracts in this country. The landlord, willing to give that encouragement which authorizes the expence and labour of reclaiming, wishes to select those who can second his electioneering purposes. He in general will not receive Catholics, he cannot procure protestants; under the dilemma, wastes are suffered to remain, which might be rendered productive.*

proceeds from the vexatious partiality encouraged by our statutes. In those parts of the north in which the inhabitants are almost entirely Protestants, there is little room, and no reason for preference. The people are comfortable and thrifty, and the country rather overstocked with population. On the same soil, under the same climate, under apparently the same government, are to be found entire counties covered with spiritless wretches, naked, famishing, and who continually, by petty insurrections, upbraid their misery to their oppressors. It is true, that the law does not enjoin the evil ; but law can so dispose men's interest, as to produce mischief without absolutely ordaining it. The Roman Catholics are not now as they were a few years back, subject to that absurd, impolitic, and capricious tyranny, which prohibited them to prosecute their interest in their native country, or to deposit the fruits of their industry in its bosom. But if no man will encourage them upon his estate, the most pernicious part of the old system is continued, a negative is put upon the prosperity of the husbandman and manufacturer.

I am far from stating it as a matter of national concern, whether any section of the country is tenanted by one or the other religion ; but I complain, that the poor and uneducated are often called on to take oaths, which their conscience reprehends, under penalty of forfeiting the means of subsistence. I complain of it as an injury to morals ; I complain of it as an outrage on humanity. Unimpeached Catholic tenants are frequently ousted from their farms, and supplanted by those who are qualified to become freeholders. As yet there are but few manufactures in Ireland ; the cultivation of the soil is the principal occupation of the inhabitants. Those who are thus ejected, are sent into the world adrift and unprovided ; driven to despair, they sometimes commit acts of violence ; the progress

gress of civilization is checked, and the national character suffers. They in general retire to commence a new career of unprotected poverty in those barren tracts which are as yet beneath the notice of their superiors*. Not infrequently they seek an asylum in the more hospitable wildernesses of America. And are these not objects of commiseration? or, in the entire range of human calamity, of injustice, and oppression, shall it be penal alone to plead the cause of the Irish Catholics? Shall the patriotism of Ireland be exhausted in barren commendations of foreign freedom, while her sons proclaim themselves at home 'the inexorable patrons of domestic bondage? We have seen it reported *from authority*, that the *force of England shall be exerted to perpetuate* the decrepitude of this portion of the Empire. Is it then a fiction, that justice and benevolence are the characteristics of England? or does she travel round the globe to extend the benefit of these national virtues to Gentoos and Negroes, whilst she turns with aversion from the complaint of injured and unoffending brethren?

"*Has she a tongue to doom a brother's death?*"

"*And shall that tongue give pardon to a slave?*"

No; the people of England understand not our case, or our condition; when they do, we shall have them our auxiliaries; they will scorn to stand at the rere of an aristocratic junto, whose opulence is not the prosperity of either country; and to whom the

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* It is a well known fact, that in some places when country gentlemen have induced protestant weavers from the North, to settle as freeholders in the Western and Southern counties, they have abandoned their original occupation of manufacture, and never assumed the new one of husbandry. Thus the nation loses two active citizens; the farmer, who is forced from tillage, and the manufacturer who is forced into it.

crown and the people are alike captives. Their ambassadors in this country will be instructed to treat with more respect the men, by whose contributions their daily luxury is supported.

Equal justice is not distributed to every order of Irishmen; in consequence of the inducements to seek by preference the favour of one party, there is, with regard to those who constitute the chosen cast, a laxity in the execution of the criminal code, which aggrieves the entire community. It is needless to add, that laxity to one implies unequal rigour to the other. I allude here to the power which devolves upon private gentlemen, and that which is entrusted to subordinate magistrates. I impeach not the integrity of the Irish tribunals; but there are evils arising out of the manners and habits of a country, which those who preside over the administration of justice, be they ever so pure, cannot redress, or even discover; minute grievances that wear down a gallant people. Nor, indeed, are the immediate instruments of the mischief in an extreme degree culpable, the temptation is more than human nature is in general prepared to resist. But, if Ireland is to be re-generated, these manners, habits, and interests must be destroyed, and every inducement to recur to them obliterated; until that event shall take place, the constitution will not regain its original purity; corruption and court influence will prevail in Ireland.

The first fruit of that alteration must be to communicate some importance to those who cultivate the soil, without doubt the most useful class of men in society. If the Catholic poor are placed within the pale of the constitution, the cheerless wretches, who now deform the face of Ireland, will change rapidly to a bold yeomanry, the ornament and protection of their country. Such a phalanx existed before these statutes for the devastation of Ireland had been fabricated. The resurrection of the yeomanry

manry must lead to another good consequence. There exists at present, between the proprietor and occupier of the soil, a class of opulent men, of whom the wealth and industry are useless to their country. In proportion as the tertenant is encouraged by the landlord, persons of this description will retire into towns, and betake themselves to commerce. Thus, at one stroke, you create a yeoman, and recruit the commercial interest of the country.

And what is the advantage to be derived from so many hardships, and for which so many obvious benefits are to be neglected? If that code of desolation, denominated the popery laws, has any object besides oppression, it must be to extinguish the Catholic religion; and this, I venture to assert, would not alone be unproductive of any good, but must prove the cause of much positive mischief to the country.

If divesting myself of a natural partiality for that denomination of christians, amongst whom I have been educated, and of whom the principles and practice meet my decided approbation, I could assume the character of a latitudinarian, and consider the sects of christianity with a reference merely to political convenience; even then, I should advise the rulers of Ireland to cherish the Catholic religion. They ought to feel rejoiced at the arrangement produced by accident. They have sects of naked speculation for those, who reflect. They have a religion of show and observances, for those, in whom devotion craves assistance from the senses. I should indeed recommend, that all inducements to conformity might from the present hour be removed, and every man be permitted to shape his creed by his own conviction. Interested conformity has been the bane of morals in this country. It is a channel which conveys an annual current of irreligion into the establishment. A thinking man may change
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his opinion on points of doctrine ; but, for the mass of mankind, occupied or uninstructed, metaphysical questions either are placed beyond their comprehension, or they want leisure to discuss them. Such men learn to despise, not to alter their tenets. The convulsion which wrests from them their early prejudices, plunges them at once into irreligion ; they become deists before they assume the garb of Protestants. The present plan of proselytism is infamous and destructive. Let us consider the matter in another view, and examine whether any useful end whatsoever is to be obtained, by converting the people of Ireland to reformed Episcopacy.

I presume, that I do not offer any indignity to the members of the dominant hierarchy, when I assert, that, like every body of men who have been placed in similar circumstances, the affluence which they enjoy, and in many instances it is most deservedly bestowed, has proved injurious to their activity. They do not familiarize themselves with the people, they do not learn their language, they do not go amongst them to convey instruction, and administer spiritual comfort ; all these essential duties devolve upon the Catholic clergy. Let me ask the advocates for universal conformity, what is to become of the morals of the great body of their countrymen, when the bonds are severed which unite them to their present pastors ? Do they suppose that the opulent dignitaries of the establishment, will interrupt a tranquillity usually elegant, and often lettered, to mingle with the wretches of the land, to instruct the cottage and console the cavern. If the poor Roman Catholics conform, they will not be attended to ; they must therefore either lose their morals, or fall into some dissenting congregations ; and thus the great inconvenience, a double establishment, is not remedied. The clergy of the Church of Ireland are too rich to become sedulous. They have in general been accustomed to consider
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their livings as sinecures, and the beggary of the nation would seem to them, I believe, no very acceptable acquisition. In proportion as they were alienated from the Church of Rome, the inhabitants of the Western and Southern parts of Ireland would become Methodists or Arminians; and what is that higher order of virtue inculcated by the reformation, which, if uniformity is not to be procured, renders one species of dissent more valuable than another?

Here, perhaps, the arrogant bigot will exclaim, that this reverence to religion, and attachment to the clergy, so eminent among the Roman Catholics of this country, is mingled with superstition. I could demonstrate that superstition belongs not to the Church of Rome, it is in every sect the common foible of the weak and the illiterate; but I wave discussion, and for an instant will suppose the imputation founded. In the name of God, if trembling for his eternal allotment, awed by the terrors, and agitated by the perplexities of futurity, the anxious mind shall procure a single consolation to repose on. Smile, if you will, ye wise, elated in your own imaginations. But why should you interfere to abridge the gratifications of unoffending credulity? whilst he interrupts not the harmony of society, and the rights and convenience of his neighbour is, not every individual entitled to adopt that system which seems most congenial to his mind, or those practices which are suggested by his fancy. *Deorum injuriæ, diis curæ.* If he errs, the thunder of heaven can avenge its cause, and prostrate its victim, must the storm be directed by an ecclesiastic, or a statesman. For myself, if I seemed to receive a supernatural injunction to harass my fellow creatures, for principles or practices not amounting to an overt act of injustice, I should reject it as an illusion of my senses: The Almighty could not be at variance with infinite wisdom, eternal justice and
mercy,

mercy, his essential attributes. There is no description of men in Ireland who deserve to rank higher in recompence from the state, or estimation with the people, than the Roman Catholic clergy. To them is the nation indebted for the peaceable demeanor of an oppressed peasantry. They have been commendably occupied in promoting morality among the lower ranks in all those districts in which their religion is prevalent. They are, with few exceptions, men of exemplary conduct, and headed by prelates of accomplished minds and estimable virtues. A better government than ours would cherish this deserving order; a more enlightened people than we are, would receive them with respect and tenderness, not pursue them with an unmeaning sneer and unmerited contumely.* I know that excellent and useful body of citizens, and how unimportant soever my testimony, in this age of rebuke, they shall receive it. I have seen them led by an irresistible sense of duty, brave every danger, and encounter every inconvenience, to administer those rights which cheer the dying wretch, and brighten to his mind the vision of hereafter. I have seen them follow the summons of calamity, at night, amidst the inclemency of the weather, over tracts of waste and mountain, such as affluence knows only from romance, when it would enhance its enjoyments by the contrast of distress, and the luxury

* *The Irish legislature has advanced one step further. It has enacted in the year, 1792, I presume, in its wisdom, benignity, and liberality, that a Clergyman of the Church of Rome shall be hanged, if he venture to commit the crime of marrying his parishioner to a Protestant. I shall make no remark on this capricious and disproportionate penalty; nor shall I enlarge on the contrast of national utility, between a Catholic priest discharging parochial duties, and one half the bench of Bishops who do not perform any.*

luxury of commiseration. A sarcasm upon this order, or upon their religion, was, I hope, for the honor of my country, not acceptable to those amongst whom it was delivered. It will, I believe, not be easy to find a society of discerning men, unwilling to pronounce the Catholic clergy the best benefactors of Ireland; or of men of letters, who would look down upon that catalogue in which the titular Bishop of Waterford is included.*

Far be it from me to reprehend the enlightened constancy exerted in obtaining our constitution; or the virtuous anxiety, which watches over its progress to maturity. No; I view with enthusiasm the virtue of all, the wisdom of those who counselled; the spirit of those who obeyed; and anticipate the reverence posterity will shew to the men who made a boast to be an Irishman. It is a common cause of congratulation, that barriers are opposed to the encroachments of power; that the temptation, because the ability of men in station to act dishonestly is abridged. But shall we not in the warmth of this exultation, call upon the fortunate of our countrymen, and conjure them by the spirit that made them free, to compassionate the bondage of their brethren. Shall we not tell them, that every invasion of their rights, as it awakens the jealousy of liberty, should excite tenderness for similar violations? It may be said that the demand is premature; can any time be premature for a great act of expedience and justice? Or can any period be less premature, than a season of profound tranquillity, to revise

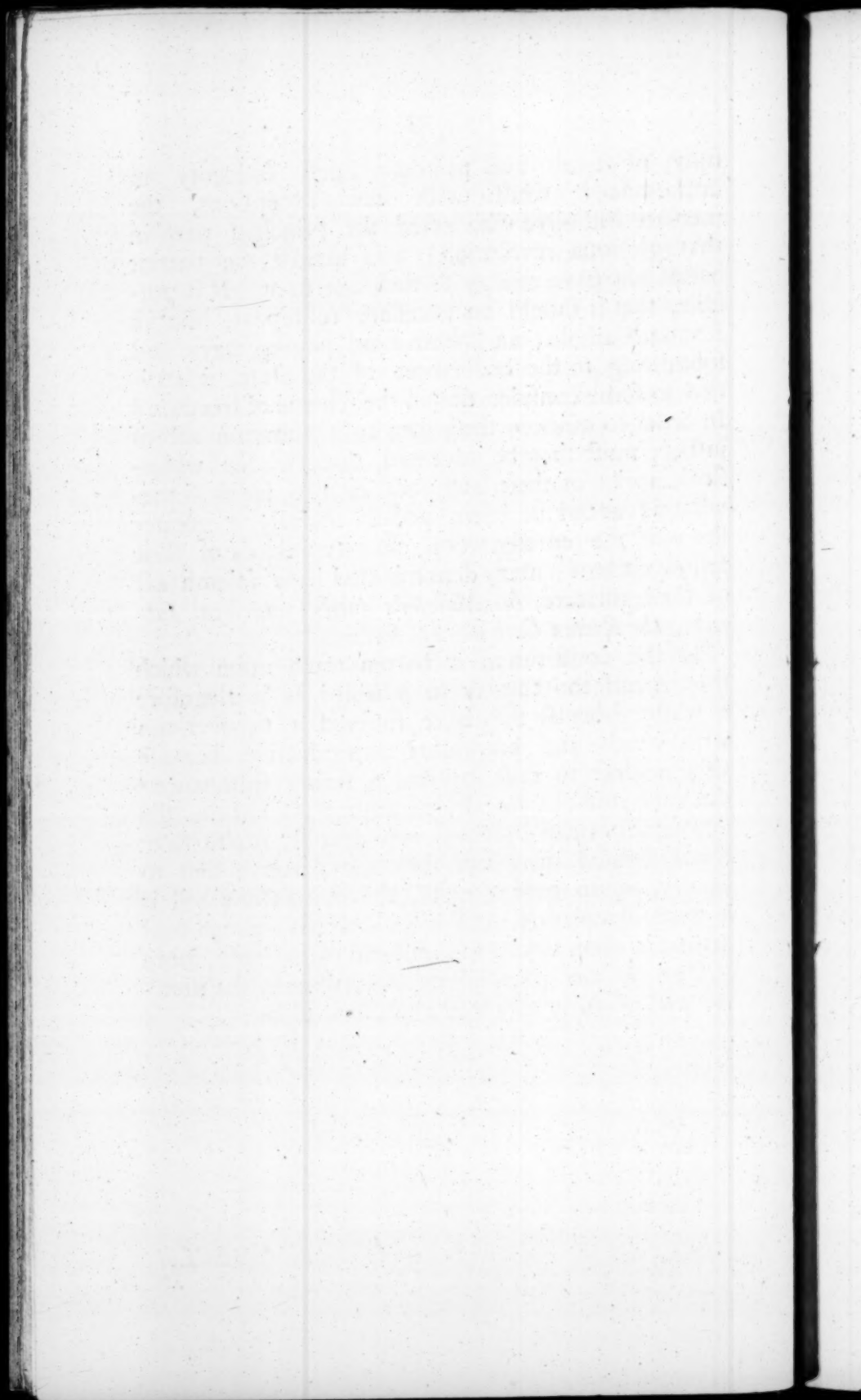
* I have selected Doctor Egan as an eminent, not a solitary instance of literary superiority among the Catholic clergy of Ireland. I could recount numbers qualified to add lustre to any rank, any order, or any country. Will this great and estimable person forgive this intrusion upon a retreat dignified by every virtue, and decorated by every learning.

revise our system of government, and remove what the lapse of years has left erroneous? What! if I am entitled to shoot game on any man's manor, I shall be tenacious of my right; the law will uphold me, and will preserve me harmless in the extreme acts of violence, by which I may support it. And here, when the stake is all a man of sense and spirit can hold dear, are we to be put off with frivolous allegations? What can there be in Ireland now more than in fifty years hence, why, this claim of justice should not be entertained? and either the demand of the Roman Catholics admitted, or satisfactory reasons advanced for the refusal? The truth is, the silent acquiescence of the Roman Catholics is the state secret, the only motive, and indeed the only justification for persisting in this system; and until they can collect sufficient resolution, constitutionally to express their feelings, and sufficient unanimity to accompany the demand with all the influence their money can bestow, every period of redress will be unseasonable.

In the course of this discussion I have declined any interference with the abstract claim of right, not abandoning the question, but unwilling to agitate it, and aware that the principle may be distorted to subvert any government. It is demanded only for the Roman Catholics, that if not attainted of any crime, (and I know not that they are convicted) they be admitted to the benefit of that protection, which is necessary to encourage enterprise, and give content to competence. That their industry, or the exercise of their talents, be not restricted; that property in their hands be not denied its natural influence; that they should not, by a reiteration of wrongs, and false charges, be compelled, in fact, to adopt the principles imputed to them, and really to become the heinous delinquents they have been represented. Is it possible that in a nation which, obscure and unknown, has by the
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force of spirit and principle burst suddenly in importance? whilst with few exceptions, the men are still alive who acted the principal part in that glorious revolution; and amidst the patriot bands who gave energy to their exertions: Is it possible, that it should be necessary to repeat, that a Roman Catholic, an honest man, paying taxes, and submitting to the ordinances of the state, is entitled to some consideration in the scheme of freedom? In order to quicken these men to a common act of justice, must they be informed, that by the whimsical caprice of their laws, one or two ladies somewhat advanced in years, possess literally a greater share of the representation, than two thirds of their fellow citizens; men, denominated by a solemn act of the legislature, *his Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects, the Roman Catholics of Ireland*.

Is the constitution a barren tract, upon which they dread too thickly to inhabit? Is it therefore a waste, because they have suffered it to over-run with weeds and brambles? unproductive, because they neglect to raise beyond a scanty sustenance? do they mistake for the parsimony of nature, the desolation caused by their own churlish prohibition. Short sighted men, can they not perceive that to liberty, as to parent earth, the cultivator's toil is a grateful oblation, and rewarded with a ten-fold return of abundance; more liberal of her gifts, more profuse of her enjoyments, according to the number and assiduity of those who solicit them.



DUBLIN, October 21st, 1791.

* D E C L A R A T I O N

O F T H E

Catholic Society of Dublin.

IN the present enlightened and improving period of Society, it is not for the IRISH ROMAN CATHOLICS alone to continue silent. Not accused of any crime ; not conscious of any delinquency, they suffer a privation of rights and conveniencies, the penalty reserved in wise states for offences of atrocious magnitude. It does not become them, whilst with liberality ever to be gratefully remembered, many descriptions of their Fellow-citizens compassionate their situation, to seem indifferent to the desirable, and, they hope, not distant event of their emancipation. They wish to ascertain upon what terms they may venture to settle in a Country, which they love, with the rational preference of Men, not the simplicity of puerile acquiescence. It is not for the IRISH CATHOLICS, armed as their cause is, with reason and justice, like public foes to

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* This paper was written by Dr. M'Kenna at the request of a number of respectable gentlemen, who united under the name of the Catholic Society of Dublin, it was unanimously adopted by the Society as containing their political sentiments, and published by them.

seek advantage from public calamity. They ought to advance their claim at a time most favourable to discussion, when the condition of the Empire is flourishing and tranquil. They might seem culpable to their Country, if, affecting to dissemble what it were unmanly not to feel, they reserved their pretensions in ambush, to augment the perplexities of some critical emergency. They should be culpable to posterity, if they omitted to profit of the general inclination of public sentiment. They should be culpable to themselves, if they suffered an imputation to subsist, that in the extent of the British territory they alone submit without repining, to a mortifying and oppressive bondage, degrading to themselves, and pernicious to their Country. They conceive, that in the present state of things, their silence might be received as evidence of such dispositions.

INFLUENCED by these considerations, and instructed by a recent transaction*, that although laws may be shameful and preposterous, there is no security that they shall not be enforced; for even in a philosophic age there will be bigots, and tyrants where the votaries of freedom are most sanguine. A number of ROMAN CATHOLICS, resident in Dublin, have formed themselves into a Society, which they invite their Fellow-sufferers throughout the Nation to unite with, which shall have for its object to consider, and individually to support with all their zeal and personal influence, such measures, not inconsistent with their duty to the civil Magistrate, as shall appear likely to relieve them from the oppressions and disqualifications imposed in this Country on persons professing the ROMAN CATHOLIC Religion. We therefore do unanimously resolve,
THAT

* *The resolutions of the Co. Armagh Grand-Jury for putting the law in force against Roman Catholics who kept arms.*

THAT we will, to the utmost of our power, endeavour by all legal and constitutional means, to procure the repeal of the laws by which we are aggrieved, as ROMAN CATHOLICS. That we will promote repeated applications to every branch of the legislature for that purpose; and assist such applications by all means of legal influence, which it shall at any time be possible for us to exert.

It would be tedious, it might prove disgusting, to recount each individual grievance under which we suffer. The ROMAN CATHOLICS seem preserved in this Land but as a source of Revenue. The whole legislative, the whole executive, the whole judicial powers of the State, are in the hands of men over whom they have no controul, and with whom they can have little intercourse. They are prohibited to engage in any mode of industry from which it is possible to debar them, or which is worth the monopoly. They are restricted in the education of their children. As conscientious men we cannot lightly abandon our religion; as prudent men we hesitate to engage in controversial study: the wisest have been bewildered in such pursuits, and they are for the most part incompatible with our necessary occupations. Nor is there any moral advantage held out as an inducement to change our Creed. It is not pretended that we should become better men, or more dutiful subjects, but merely experimentalists in Religion, seek to gratify their caprice by forcing us from our habits of education into the perplexing labyrinth of theology.

* THE liberty of IRELAND to those of our communion is a calamity, and their misfortunes seem likely to

* A person who did me the honor to write an anonymous and scurrilous pamphlet, full of what I suppose he deemed personal insults against me, proposed a question on this paragraph, "whether I thought the octennial bill an evil?" I answer, I do think that in the present state of representation

to increase, as the country shall improve in prosperity and freedom. They may look with envy to the subjects of an arbitrary Monarch, and contrast that government in which one great tyrant ravages the land, with the thousand inferior despots whom at every instant they must encounter. They have the bustle and cumbersome forms, without the advantages of liberty. The octennial period, at which the delegated trust of legislation is revoked, and his importance restored to the constituent, returns but to disturb their tranquillity, and revive the recollection of their debasement. All the activity, all the popular arts of electioneering canvas, enforce the idea of their insignificance; they exemplify it too; witness the various preferences given by persons of rank to, not always the most deserving among our Protestant Countrymen, a preference nearly as detrimental to the independent Protestants, as to us.

THERE exists not on our behalf any controul over power. We have felt the truth of this assertion, when

representation in Ireland, it is a nuisance; it incommodes the Catholics, and does not procure liberty to the Protestants. I think further, that the people of Scotland, who have no sort of interference with the election of members of parliament, are better circumstanced than the people of Ireland, whose right of interference is limited to one race, and these not selected on account of property. The representation of Scotland does not produce much good, but occasions no mischief. It will be said that every man in England is not represented. True; nor is it perhaps necessary (though I do not pronounce it improper) that every man in Ireland should be represented. But every man in England, if he abuses, to acquire property, may ascend into the class of freeholders. In England, all men of the same rank are equal; there is not, as with us, grounds for compulsory partiality.

when in this age of toleration, even within the last eight years, several new penal statutes have been enacted against us*. We experience it daily, not alone in the great deliberations of the nation, but in the little concerns of minute districts. Not alone in the levy of public money for the service of the state, but in the local imposition of County and parochial taxes. We appeal to our rulers, we appeal to Ireland, we appeal to Europe, if we deserve a place in Society, should we seem willing to insinuate that such a situation is not severely unacceptable.

WE are satisfied that the mere repeal of the laws against us will prove but feebly beneficial, unless the act be sanctioned by the concurrence of our Protestant brethren, and those jealousies removed by which the social intercourse of private life is interrupted. It is time we should cease to be distinct nations, forcibly enclosed within the limits of one island. It shall be a capital object of our institution to encourage the spirit of harmony, and sentiments of affection, which the ties of common interest, and common country, ought, ere now, to have inspired. Countrymen! too long have we suffered ourselves to be opposed in rival factions to each other, the sport of those who felt no tenderness for either. Why should a diversity of sentiment, so usual where the matter in debate is abstruse or important, separate those whom Heaven placed together for mutual benefit and consolation? Objects material in their day produced hostility between our ancestors. The causes of that discord have ceased to exist; let the enmity too perish. Let it be the duty of the present and of future ages to prevent the recurrence of such unnatural and calamitous dissention, except in the actual discharge of the religious duties, which conscience renders inevitable,
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* See the report of the committee of the Society of United Irishmen.

we wish there never shall be found a trace of difference, which may possibly divide us into distinct communities.

THE ill effects of these restrictions are not confined to those of our Religion, they extend to every individual, and every public body in the nation; under the weight of them industry is depressed; under their influence, public spirit is enervated. IT IS THE INTEREST OF EVERY MAN IN IRELAND, THAT THE ENTIRE CODE SHOULD BE ABOLISHED. It is the interest of the Crown, as it must promote the general happiness of the subjects. It is the interest of the great, as it will serve to tranquilize the Country, and to encourage industry. It is the additional interest of the middle and inferior ranks, as it must impart new importance to their sentiments, and to the expression of their sentiments: we call upon every order in the state, not alone by their benevolence and justice, but by their patriotism and self-interest, to co-operate with our exertions.

It adds the insult of mockery to the misfortune of the *Irish Catholics*, that the number of persons aggrieved, in every other instance an inducement to redress, is a reason alledged to procrastinate their relief, and an argument used to impose silence on their murmurs. Is it their act, that a multitude of Irishmen are aggregated by common grievance, and classed in one great community of fellow-sufferers? Why accuse them of hostility to the constitution? They earnestly solicit to participate in its advantages. Why suspect them of enmity to their Country? They desire entirely to incorporate themselves with it,—to contract closer ties, which shall decide them to consign their posterity irrevocably to its bosom. We envy not its endowments to the established Church; adversity has instructed us, that all the consolations which our religion promises, are most faithfully and tenderly administered

administered by pastors with moderate appointments, a free gift of gratitude to the kindest benefactors. Fastidiously excluded from the constitution, we can pronounce on it but as aliens, by speculation. We discern in it the means of much happiness; we regret that its symmetry is not complete; a chasm remains which might be filled with advantage by the ROMAN CATHOLICS; we have neither passion nor interest at variance with the order of things it professes to establish. We desire only that property in our hands may have its natural weight, and merit in our children its rational encouragement. We have sworn allegiance to our sovereign, and the very evils we complain of prove how inviolable is our attachment to such obligations. We respect the peerage, the ornament of the state, and bulwark of the people; interposing, as we hope the *Irish Catholics* will experience, mediatory good offices between authority and the objects of it. We solicit a share of interest in the existence of the commons. Do you require an additional test? We offer one more unequivocal than a volume of abjurations. *We hope to be free, and will endeavour to be united.* Do you require new proofs of sincerity? We stood by you in the exigencies of our country. We extend our hands, the pledge of cordiality. *Who is he that calls himself a friend to IRELAND, and will refuse us?*

WE feel ourselves justified in this association: The period draws near when it will befit the IRISH CATHOLICS to approach the legislature with respectful solicitation. It is meet that those who suffer should confer, in order to ascertain the means and matter of redress likely to prove at once satisfactory and successful. It is insinuated that some of our Protestant Brethren are adverse to our emancipation; it is meet we should investigate the grounds of this strange assertion. The laws that have separated

rated us from our countrymen, destroying our intercourse with bodies constituted by authority, leave us no other manner to collect, or to convey the general sense of our grievances, than this of a self-created society. We mean not to interfere with the harmony now happily subsisting through the nation: if the applications on our behalf are complied with, we can never have occasion. If rejected, we cannot have an interest to interrupt it. Engaged for the most part in the various departments of commerce, we are concerned not less than any other class of citizens, to cultivate the blessings of tranquillity; individually we have more at stake than some, who presume to falsify our motives, and calumniate our actions. The ROMAN CATHOLIC body measured strength with the power of the state and was vanquished, when it possessed a force that never more can be exerted, and was opposed to enemies far less numerous than now it should encounter. The confiscations of that period are confirmed to the present occupiers by immemorial possession, by the utter impossibility of ascertaining the original proprietors, by the personal and pecuniary interest of almost every ROMAN CATHOLIC in the land to maintain the settlement. Many of our communion already have, and still more are likely to expend their property on titles derived under these forfeitures. It is not from the wealthy, attached to their present enjoyment, that commotion is to be apprehended. It is not from the industrious, a single year of anarchy must prove fatal to their competence. It is not from the poor, a wretched band of slaves, mouldering under these bad laws, and only made use of to degrade the *Irish Catholics* to a rabble, when it is convenient to despise them. We are willing to forget that any besides the present race ever existed in this island. We long have been willing to forget it, if our recollection were not kept

kept alive by what we suffer, and by the celebration of festivals, memorable only as they denote the æra and the events from whence we date our bondage.

WE will endeavour by temperate, but unremitting assiduity, to procure the benefit of that constitution which, of all our fellow-subjects, is denied alone to those of our persuasion. We are amenable to all the decrees of the state; we contribute to all its exigencies; we are still to be informed upon what grounds its advantages are made a monopoly to our exclusion. We challenge an investigation of our principles and conduct, we feel not in ourselves, we know not that there is in our brethren, a deficiency of manly spirit, of capacity or virtue, which ought to assign to the *Irish* ROMAN CATHOLIC an inferior rank among the creatures of our common father. If we have a crime, it is to have slept over our chains; our cause is the cause of justice, and our country. We solicit counsel and assistance from all to whom these sacred names do not present themselves unheeded.

To the patronage of the lettered we particularly recommend ourselves: where talents have arisen among us, they have been compelled to seek refuge in a foreign country, or they have perished in their infancy, robbed of the hope that animates, curtailed of the education that invigorates them. We claim as of right the benefit of open trial and candid discussion; even amidst the cares of legislating for an extensive empire, the *British* Senate did not refuse its attention to the unfortunate exiles of *Africa*. If in this enlightened age it is still our doom to suffer, we submit; but at least let us learn what imputation of crimes can instigate, or what motives of expediency can account for, the denunciation of that heavy judgment. That if loyalty, which strong temptations could never alienate; if exemplary

exemplary good conduct under the most trying circumstances ; if reverence to a constitution, which in our native land we are forbidden to approach, be insufficient to remove unjust aspersions, and entitle us to the kindness and confidence of our brethren ; we may be at least instructed how we should atone for what we cannot deem inexpiable,—*The political errors, or misfortunes, of our ancestors.*



By Order, &c. &c.

F I N I S.

